HER LITTLE YOUNG LADYSHIP

MYRA KELLY



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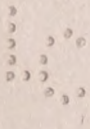
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HER LITTLE YOUNG LADYSHIP

BY

MYRA KELLY

Author of "Little Aliens," "Little Citizens," Etc.

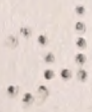


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TO

ALLAN MACNAUGHTAN

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1910

HER LITTLE YOUNG LADYSHIP

CHAPTER I

"SEVEN o'clock, sir!" said the correct and punctual James, entering his master's room. "Seven o'clock, if you please, my lord."

Lord Gresham turned and looked at his faithful servitor. Experience had taught him to detect the presence of information in James. He detected it now and lay back with a smile.

"Go on," said he. "What is it?"

"We can't stay 'ere long, sir," James burst out. "You remember your dinner last night?" His lordship nodded. "Well, your breakfast bids fair to be worse. The proprietor as acts always as barmaid is actin' now as cook. I saw queer things done with food by the blacks in Virginia, but never did I see or hope to see anything like what that man Kenny is doing with the 'am and the porridge —disgustin', I calls it. And in a country they 'as the impudence to call New England.

The occupant of the best bedroom of the only hotel in Edgecombe, Connecticut, laughed reassuringly. "It can't be worse than dinner was," he

pointed out. "Nothing could, you know. Was he responsible for that?"

"No, m' lord. Dinner was done by the cook, but after dinner words passed between 'er and the proprietor. They was on the subject of more flies than currants in the rice pudding, as your lordship knowed at the time. Mr. Kenny's words was moderate in the circumstances, but she was in an unreasonable state of mind through 'im having earlier in the day smacked her face with a leg of mutton. Your lordship remembers the leg of mutton?"

"I do," answered Gresham. "It was an atrocious leg of mutton."

"Well," James continued, "she has went; and the question now remains, what is your lordship going to eat, and how am I going to get it?"

"You know perfectly well," laughed his master; "there's no question about it. I shall live on the fat of the land, and you will get it for me as you always do somehow. We can't leave this place immediately, but I can promise that we sha'n't stay long. Get the hot water, and while you are down-stairs ask a question or two about a gentleman called Forbes—John Forbes—he grows tobacco about here. He's the man I've come to Edgecombe to see."

James vanished obediently, but in the hall, which was pervaded by the atmosphere of dead chops and long-ago dough-nuts, he allowed himself the mutinous hope that John Forbes was dead or away or otherwise invisible.

James was, in fact, rather bored by the whole journey. He was much older than his present master, and in former services he had embarked upon travels as various as they were hazardous. He had travelled across continents in search of a lion or a lady, a beetle, a book, or even buried treasure, and these incentives he had come to understand. He had even been enthusiastic in the quest of the lady and the beetle. The lions and the buried treasure had not appealed to his matter-of-fact imagination. But this quest of young Lord Gresham's was even less to his taste. Why should a young man of wealth, position and large property abandon the comfort and the pleasure of his domain to travel incognito from one uninteresting place to another; spend his days with uncouth overseers; endure discomforts of mosquitoes, privations and malarial fever, simply to verify or to obtain at first hand knowledge which was to be found in books. Knowledge of tobacco! James utterly despised tobacco except in its proper places. These he considered to be

smoking-rooms, tobacco-shops, pipes, cigars and cigarettes. He took no interest in its preliminary stages. Also he took no interest in the impoverished tenantry on his master's estate. He regarded them with an impatient disgust, and felt debased by the knowledge that it was for their sake, to supply them with employment, that he and Lord Gresham had spent months in unhealthy towns in the southern states of America, investigating, listening, taking notes. He had comforted himself through weeks of slow boiling discomfort by the anticipation of this visit to New England, and now, on the morning after their arrival in this bourn, he was forced to admit that the change was not for the better.

But the incognito which Lord Gresham chose to assume was what rankled most sorely in his British rank-and-title-loving mind. He was treated as the common servant of an ordinary man, and he did not enjoy the experience. It hurt his pride. He was the valet of a peer of the British realm, and the state and formality which the master relinquished so easily was dear and almost essential to the man. In public he obeyed orders and dropped his master's title, but in private he still affected forgetfulness, and revelled in "my lord."

He hated democracy, and in the democratic economy of Mr. Kenny's establishment all the guests, male and female, servant and master, dined, supped or breakfasted in one hungry assembly and in one fly-infested dining-room. James met this intolerable situation by choosing a table diametrically opposite to that at which his master sat. He was close to the opening in the wall through which the food made its appearance, and he rigidly inspected every dish before allowing the haughty young woman who served as waitress to lay it before his master. Even this oversight sometimes failed to satisfy his care, and he would thread the inconvenient maze of chairs and oil-clothed tables to impart grave doubts as to the youth of the eggs and grave warnings against the stewed prunes.

"They keeps them from week to week, m' lord," he whispered. "What isn't eaten one day they puts back into the stew-pan and ladles out the next. They put the tea in cold water and then brought it to a boil, cooking the eggs at the same time and in the same receptacle. I wouldn't have much to do with them, sir, if you was to ask my advice. The bread ain't so bad, it came down from the city on an early train, and the milk was fresh this morning. I saw them milking the

cow. So if you was to ask me what you'd better breakfast on, I should answer 'Bread and milk.'"

Upon these frugal elements Lord Gresham was concentrating his energies when James, having finished his own repast, reported for orders.

"It seems to be the general opinion, sir," said he, "that this 'ere Mr. Forbes is the most important man any place about 'ere. I mentioned it to Mr. Kenny as 'ow you had a letter to 'im, and he said as that he guessed as much, and then he guessed the letter would about end us here. He showed me Mr. Forbes's house—you can see it plainly from the door. High on the hill it is, very large and very white."

"I noticed it," his lordship answered. "I will stroll up there some time this morning. Did you understand what this man Kenny meant by saying the letter would finish us here?"

"I did not, my lord," James made reply. "I don't always understand what these 'ere natives are saying."

"I wonder what he meant," pondered Gresham.

"Couldn't undertake to say, my lord, I am sure; but this I did understand, they all expect a very hot day, sir. They haven't had a drop of rain since the last of May, and here it's the nineteenth of

June: an awful climate, sir, but I should say, quite good enough for them that lives in it."

An hour later when Lord Gresham, disregarding the warnings of his host and the remonstrances of his servant, fared forth into the glare of Edgecombe's main street, he sympathised sincerely with James's desire to shake its dust from his feet. But the Edgecombe dust, after nearly three weeks of drought, was not to be shaken off. It rose in clouds about any moving thing. Not even a dog could cross the road without raising it in dense volumes, and when an automobile full of shrouded figures tore its way past Gresham, he swore fluently as he choked and strangled on the footpath. Fortunately, the distance to the white house on the hill was not great, and it was with a sigh of relief that he turned in at its gate and left the road behind him. A few steps brought him to an arch in the hedge which screened an elaborate garden.

CHAPTER II

A BURNING sun high in a cloudless heaven was doing its best to ruin everything in the garden. It is a way such suns have in the "hot spells" which frequently disfigure the last week of May in the New England climate. But only the keen eyes of a gardener—and a disgruntled one—could have detected that ruin was hovering near the beds and bushes over which Reuben Sands shook so depairing a head.

To the hot young Gresham the garden was a lovely spot. Its winding paths shaded by lilac and syringa, by fresh-leaved maple and by solemn evergreen, afforded a most welcome relief from the heat and glare of the road. Between the garden and this road lay a stretch of lawn; between the garden and the house the grass appeared again; so that none of the soil and turmoil of the highway could reach the vine-hung porches. All this expanse of green and flower sloped somewhat steeply upward—hence the winding of the paths—to a large rather ungainly house. To have held Queen Anne's architects responsible for the eccentricity of bay-window, chimney, dormer, turret, porte-

cochère and balcony which it presented to the blazing sun, and the dusty road, would be to add an undeserved enormity to a not too brilliant reign.

Lord Gresham discerned the bent back of Reuben Sands, who was arranging a piece of canvas tent-wise over a bed of newly transplanted pansies, and fared determinedly toward it.

"Is this Mr. Forbes's place?" the stranger asked, and Reuben stood suddenly erect, so suddenly indeed that the tent collapsed and the pansies' parasol had like to be their winding-sheet, for though Reuben hated and dreaded droughts, he hated and despised "dudes," and the voice which fell upon his ear was certainly, according to his category, that of a dude. So he dropped the canvas and turned slowly. His eye corroborated the verdict of his ears. Never had he seen a more perfect specimen.

It was a tall dude, and, to unprejudiced eyes perhaps, not ill to look upon, though it was clothed in garments which would have been trying to Apollo. These were in colour a cross between a mustard and a linseed poultice; in texture they were warm and fuzzy; in shape baggy; and in their owner's calm conceit they were absolutely the correct thing with which to impress the eyes of benighted America.

"Oh, I say now, that's too bad, you know," the voice went on, when its owner saw the havoc his arrival had wrought. "We must have that up. Here, I'll give you a hand."

He gave not only the promised hand but his whole attention and dexterity, and Reuben was somewhat mollified. The stranger's next question, however, reawakened all his contempt.

"Is Mr. Forbes in, do you know?"

"In?" repeated Reuben. "Is Mr. Forbes in? Say, do you know what time of day it is?"

"Eleven," answered the stranger, looking at his watch.

"Eleven," corroborated Reuben, looking at the sun. "And do you know what day it is?"

"Thursday," said the stranger promptly.

"Well," answered Reuben, expectorating heartily, "when you find Forbes home at eleven o'clock on Thursday morning or any other week-day, you'll find a dead man, that's all. Do you suppose he's a loafer?" and his eyes, as they strayed over the young man beside him, seemed to mark the inspiration of his last words.

"But if you want to see him," he continued, "you'd better go right on up to the house, they can tell you more about him there. Mis' Forbes is in, and I guess Dot is too. She was out here a minute

ago gathering flowers, and she ain't had time to go out since."

Acting upon this advice the stranger mounted the wide steps and noted with approval the coolness produced by the creepers and by the recent sprinkling of the porch. There was no sign of life, but he noticed a table piled high with freshly cut flowers, those to which Reuben had alluded, he surmised. The door was open, and, as he rang the bell, he was struck by the beauty and good taste of the cool-looking empty hall. He was just beginning to wonder whether his effort with the bell had produced any effect, when a swinging-door at the far end of the hall burst open, and a girl entered with the peculiar twisting motion which swinging-doors impose upon those carrying, as she did, a large tray. Flower-jars and vases of all sizes were set out upon it, and the stranger realised in the act of taking off his hat that this was a lady, a beauty, and probably "Miss Forbes." As she came toward him with a little smile of interrogation he put this last surmise to the test.

"Miss Forbes?" said he, and the "dude" voice which had enraged Reuben seemed soft and pretty to her unprejudiced ear.

"Yes," she answered as she set her burden beside the flowers. "And you," she went on,

stretching a cordial hand to him, "you are Captain Gresham. We have been expecting you. Your friend and ours, Mr. Elliott, wrote to dad and told him you'd be here some time this month or last; so you see we have been looking for you quite a long time."

"And I should have been here long ago," the gallant captain responded, "if I had known—what I know now."

She caught the implication instantly and laughed at it with an amazing frankness. "My father will be here presently. You had much better wait here for him than try to find him at the mills. It is so noisy and dusty down there, and so heavenly quiet up here."

"Heavenly, indeed," Gresham answered.

Mr. Forbes did not return for nearly an hour, and during that time Dot discovered that Gresham had seen three years' service, hated London, had been to Madame Tussaud's, loved the country, owned some land and intended to devote himself for the next few years to the improvement of his estate and his tenants.

"That's the reason I'm here, don't you know?" he explained. "When I talked to Elliott about it —nice old chap, Elliott, don't you think?"

"An old darling," Dot agreed warmly.

"That is what I think. Well, Elliott advised that I should try tobacco. It grows, he says, on any soil, and employs any amount of unskilled labour—sounded just the thing for my chaps—they are unskilled enough for anything. So I came over here to see how the stuff is raised and all that sort of thing. Been to Virginia. Spent a month there and I've almost decided to give the thing a trial; but Elliott strongly advised my seeing Mr. Forbes, since the climate here is more like ours at home. Elliott says he can put me up to no end of dodges if he likes."

"Oh, he will, don't you worry," she laughed. "There is nothing he loves so much as teaching people about tobacco—why, he even taught me."

"About tobacco?"

"Yes, about tobacco. You see, I am with him quite a good deal, and so he talks things over with me. It makes it easier for him to have me understand. I can help him with the planters who come up from the South to look into his methods. Sometimes the mill keeps dad here in town, but he is just crazy about the fields. I guess it is because he has always worked in the mill, but this tobacco business is new. It is only about ten years since he got stuck on a deal and had to take a lot of waste land in payment. But you can't

stick dad. No, sir, not for long! Dad started tobacco on that land, and now it is just about as profitable as city lots."

While Dot had been culling information about her new acquaintance she had not been secretive about her own history. She told him her age, eighteen and a half, that her name was really Dorothy, and that she was an only child; that she belonged to the dearest dad in the world and the sweetest mother, and that all her nineteen years had been spent in the little town of Edgecombe, which lay outstretched before them in the valley. There he could see all the complicated buildings of her father's mill and the rows and rows of neat little cottages in which the operatives lived. There, well to the right, was the high-school which she had attended. Right in front of them was the church. Beyond that again was the big public school—"It wasn't so big when I went there, but dad donated a wing the day I graduated. I was valedictorian," she told him, with a pride which made his achievement of First at Oxford seem insignificant.

"Were you, indeed?" he cried.

"I was," she answered solemnly, "and when I read my paper mother cried and dad was so tickled he could hardly see."

"What tickled him?" asked Gresham, with some natural amazement.

"Oh, nothing. He was just tickled, that was all. Glad, you know," she explained as he still looked puzzled. "He is just the dearest dad, and oh!" she broke off as a dust-covered buggy turned in at the gate, "here he comes now. My! won't he be glad to see you."

CHAPTER III

DOROTHY ran along the porch and out upon the landing stage in the middle of the porte-cochère. She waved vehemently to the occupant of the approaching vehicle, and he waved as vehemently at her. He was not yet near enough to allow of Gresham seeing him clearly, but Dorothy required no closer identification.

"You are going to meet the dearest old dad in the world," said she. "Do you feel worthy?"

"I don't," said Gresham, "but I'll dissemble."

A little negro boy who crouched in the corner of the seat beside Mr. Forbes drove the horse round out of sight behind the house, while Forbes looked out from his daughter's embrace at the mustard-coloured stranger behind her. Gresham looked at him with no less interest and found him to be a shrewd and genial American of middle life and middle class. His costume consisted of frock-coat, gray trousers, white waistcoat and wide-brimmed straw hat. He greeted Gresham warmly when Dot had performed the introduction, and insisted that he should stay to lunch, a repast which

was even then, as Gresham could hear, making its appearance in the dining-room. He took Gresham's acceptance for granted and broke in upon his demurs with, "What will you drink, or has Dot attended to that?"

"Dad, dear," said Dot penitently, "I didn't. Honestly, I forgot all about it."

"Well, you're a nice hostess," chided her father, "a boiling hot, dusty day, and not to offer a man a drink. I am surprised at you; but never mind, we'll have time for one before lunch. Go and get the things, Dot."

Dot reappeared almost immediately with the ingredients of what Mr. Forbes described as a Scotch high-ball. And presently Mrs. Forbes came out to join them and to apologise for her tardy appearance.

"Now, mother, tell the truth," Forbes said to her, "what were you doing?"

"Oh, John," she pleaded, "how can you?"

"Why can't I?" Forbes laughed as he put his arm around her. "This is Captain Gresham, a friend of Elliott's. Do you remember Elliott, he stayed with us last year. Well! this is his friend, and, for all you know, Elliott may have told him about your little ways."

"Oh, John," she remonstrated again and blushed warmly. She was not so tall as her

daughter and not, Gresham decided, as pretty, but she had the same soft dark hair, the same brown eyes without Dot's shrewd frankness, and the same rounded chin without Dot's determination. She was most beautifully and perfectly dressed, and it was only in relation to her perfection that Gresham noticed and appraised the costly simplicity of Dot's gown.

"Well, mother, go on, we're waiting," said Forbes. "'Fess up, what were you doing?"

"I was only up in the linen-room, dear," Mrs. Forbes explained. "Captain Gresham will understand that there is a great deal to be done in keeping a big house like this running smoothly, and he won't think it's a bit kind of you to tease me about it."

"Well, I won't," said her husband, "but Captain Gresham ought to know, if he is going to stay to lunch, that you are the most inveterate housekeeper in the United States."

"My dear sir," he went on, addressing his guest, "her heart is so bound up in this house that she occasionally farms out her husband and daughter on her neighbours so that she can have it all to herself."

"Spring cleaning," explained Mrs. Forbes to Gresham. "They take it very badly."

"And it's over now," cried Dot. "We're quite, quite safe for another year."

CHAPTER IV

GRESHAM thought as he took his place at the beautifully appointed table in the handsome shutter-shaded dining-room that Mrs. Forbes's housekeeping preoccupation seemed a most satisfactory one. It was difficult, surrounded by all the familiar paraphernalia of meal-time at home, to realise that he was in an alien land, and that these people with whom he found himself so quickly on terms of ease and intimacy had been blank strangers to him three hours before.

The manner of ease and frankness which had so attracted and surprised him in the daughter was evidently the manner of the household. Even the maid who served the meal shared it, and urged dishes upon them as one having knowledge of their true constituents.

"You had better have some cream potatoes, Mr. Forbes; Mary cooked them special for you; they are the first new ones this year."

"Oh, very well," said Forbes; "that was very good of Mary."

As the meal progressed Gresham was more and

more amazed at the scope and number of the topics discussed by these three. One of them, Dot, had never crossed the mountain which enclosed the valley; Mrs. Forbes had been once or twice to New York and often to Hartford; and Forbes himself had travelled no farther than the ordinary prosecution of his business demanded. Yet here they sat discussing affairs of international interest, and Forbes's knowledge and memory of the South-African campaigns astounded his visitor. Usually the most reticent of heroes, Gresham, encouraged by their intelligent interest, found himself describing his part in various engagements, and discussing British tactics and commanders as technically, but not perhaps as frankly, as though his audience were composed of fellow-officers. They were still, conversationally, in Africa, when the meal ended and they drifted back to the veranda.

Presently Forbes's buggy reappeared, and Gresham rose to make his adieus and apologies for the unconscionable time he had stayed. A whole code of signals were exchanged between Mr. and Mrs. Forbes, and then the latter asked him, with a pretty insistence, to make his home with them for as long as he stayed at Edgecombe.

"Oh, I couldn't think of it, really," he remonstrated. "It is awfully good of you to take me

in like this, but I am quite comfortable at the hotel."

Dot turned to him suddenly. "Where do you expect to go to when you die," she demanded, "if you tell whoppers like that? No one was ever comfortable at the Edgecombe Hotel. And it is only because people leave it so quickly that it has not earned the highest death-rate of the State. You comfortable there," she laughed. "I can just see you fishing the flies out of the soup."

"Dorothy," her mother remonstrated.

"Well, I can," said Dot. "I can imagine it. I have seen so many people do it. Really, Captain Gresham, you would be more comfortable here; people generally do drift here when they have had a meal or two at the hotel."

"Well, we will call it fixed," Forbes broke out. "You stay here with the ladies this afternoon; it is too hot and too late to go out to the fields, and I'll send up for your duds as I pass the hotel. Elliott told me to take care of you, and I propose to do it. There is nothing mother enjoys so much as some one to take care of, and Dot and I are in such good shape that she can't exercise her talents on us. Are your things in your trunk or are they scattered around the room so that you would have to go down and pack them yourself?"

"You're awfully kind," said Gresham again, and really he was rather overwhelmed by this hospitality. "My things are scattered about a bit, but my man is there and he'll pack them for me. Shall he be in your way here? he can quite as well stay down there, you know."

But here Mrs. Forbes's eagerness grew, if possible, more keen. Entertaining was her hobby; one wing of the house was devoted to guest-rooms, and in it a suite had been set apart on the architect's plans for "guest with own maid or valet." Thus far it had not been used in its designated capacity; the Forbes's friends had not contracted the maid or valet habit.

Mother with daughter, father with son, had often occupied the suite, but never before in the history of Edgecombe had a valet invaded the town. Mrs. Forbes determined to secure the valet and to put him in his allotted place. She felt all the triumph of the puzzle-player who, after long effort, finds a missing piece and slips it into its waiting place.

CHAPTER V

PASSING through the village Forbes stopped at the untidy white-porticoed hotel with its long line of rickety chairs and cuspidors. The habitual number of loungers were gathered there discussing politics and the weather, and they greeted Forbes with as much respect as their democratic spirit allowed them to show. But he had no leisure nor inclination to listen to their surmises on thunder-storms or elections, and he went quickly through the screen door which led to the bar. There he found the proprietor whiling away the empty hours with yesterday's paper and a thick cigar.

"Thought you'd be down," was his greeting. "Thought so just as soon as he began asking where you lived and said he had letters of introduction to you. Queer fellow, ain't he?"

"Oh, I guess he's all right," Forbes answered.

"Sure he's all right," Jimmy Kenny replied. "But he'll go high, John, higher than most you've had from me."

"What room did he have?"

"He had three on the next floor. There was one for him, there was one he was going to have for a setting-room; we had to take the bed down—I don't know why he couldn't set in a room with a bed in it—and there was one for his hired man. Be you going to take the hired man, too?"

"Yes."

"Then there was the board for the two of them and the bar charges."

"Heavy drinker?" queried Forbes.

"No, not him; just whiskey and soda. But say, gee whiz, you ought to see that hired man."

"Well, I *want* to see him," said Forbes. "I want to tell him about bringing the duds up to the house."

"You'll find him round on the side porch," said Jimmy. "But say, I might as well tell ye he located the ingredients of mint-julep this morning, and he found the necessities of a gin ricky pretty nigh about the same time. He has been enjoying himself considerable since he made them two discoveries. Now, if you want to make it right about *his* bar charges——"

"No, Jimmy, I guess not," Forbes answered. "I guess he can keep on coming here for his juleps and rickies. I'll just make it right with you about the rooms and the board." And before

he sought out the faithful James upon the side porch, Forbes drew up a cheque of considerable magnitude to pay for one week's pleasure for his wife. It was his custom so to deflect visitors of any importance or promise of entertainment whose interests brought them into the orbit of Mr. Kenny. It was also his habit and intention to pay for what he got and to stand under obligation to no man.

The arrangement worked admirably. Mrs. Forbes gained her heart's desire; Mr. Kenny lost nothing but the trouble of entertaining the travelling public. The arrangement was of course a secret between the two men, but Forbes felt no compunction as to the kindly deceit it involved. Mother wanted company; well, he proposed to get it for her. It was well worth the price to see her so happy and so busy. Other men had untidy, uncomfortable homes and wives. The House was always a pleasure, always a credit, and his womenkind were always suitably and carefully dressed.

Forbes did not disguise from himself the fact that he, too, enjoyed entertaining the strangers who so often developed into friends. A great deal of the universality of information which had so impressed Gresham was due to the number and variety of the guests shanghaied from Mr. Kenny.

There had been ministers of various denominations, lecturers on various topics, business men representing all the branches involved in manufacture and agriculture, and lately, since he had become, to his own amazement, a tobacco planter, there had been gentle-voiced, courteous Southerners, gracious of manner and quick of temper when they were old, casual of manner and strangely lacking in energy when young. Not only Mrs. Forbes benefited by this constant hospitality, it had been a liberal education for Dot; it was the source of the calm, frank graciousness which so attracted Gresham.

CHAPTER VI

THE next few days were full of novelty and excitement for Lord Gresham. He quickly won Mrs. Forbes's heart by his very real admiration for The House and his keen and sensible interest in all its arrangements.

"I have a house of my own," he informed her, "a great ramshackle affair with the wind blowing through it, but when I go back I am going to make the housekeeper try a whole lot of the dodges I have seen here for making things easy and comfortable. Although," he admitted, "it is not easy for me to teach her anything. You see, she was with my people for years, and was at the head of things when I was born, and she still seems to think I am a little chap and ought to be eating bread and jam in the nursery."

He was quite earnest in his admiration of The House, though its architecture puzzled him a little, until Mrs. Forbes told him the history of its development.

"We didn't contemplate building so large a house at all," said she. They had returned to the

porch after their inspection, and Gresham was smoking in a large chair as comfortably as though Edgecombe and The House were his natural habitat. Dot and her father were off on some business expedition. He took her with him whenever possible, and the stranger was alone with his hostess. He was glad of an opportunity to talk to her. Somehow in the society of her more insistent daughter he felt that he had not appreciated the quiet sense and strength of the mother; and he had accepted with alacrity her rather timid proposition that, as they had an hour or two unprovided for, he should allow her to show him The House. They had been all over it from cellar to attic, and he had found, as he told her, all its appointments characterised by good taste and good sense. Her pride in it was as manifest as it had cause to be. It was her plaything, her hobby, her reward for long years of waiting.

"You see," she returned to her story, "when I was quite young, Mr. Forbes was not so well off as lots of other young men in the town. His father owned the mill, but it wasn't half the mill then that he has made it since. He just worked as clerk. You don't mind," she suddenly broke off, "my telling you about it?"

"My dear madam," he answered in all sincerity, "I am charmed."

"Well," she went on, "there was another young man in the town whom I thought a good deal of—seems funny for me to be talking to you like this—and he was quite wealthy. He had a house down there where you can see the depot now; it was a right pretty house and he said he'd get it all furnished and papered new if I'd let him. He was an orphan, you see, and we'd have had the house all to ourselves, and Mr. Forbes didn't have any house at that time, and if I married him we would have to take rooms somewhere, or else live with his people or with mine until he could get a little better fixed. I had kept house for my father ever since I was twelve years old. Mother died then, and whenever I thought about getting married it meant having things of my very own around me. I always did love china and pretty furniture, and father didn't care much what he had. 'The old things were good enough,' he said, 'they would last as long as he did, anyhow'; so you can see it meant quite a good deal to me, that other house and new furniture and paper and paint and all. And everything just as I wanted it. Mr. Forbes knew how I felt, and one night he said that if I'd marry him and wait a little while he'd

build me the loveliest house that Edgecombe had ever seen and fill it full of the loveliest things. If I'd wait. And I waited. And now you have seen The House," she ended, with a little shake in her voice, "and I guess you will have thought he kept his word."

"Rather," cried Gresham warmly. "I should say he had. Who designed it?"

"We both did," she answered proudly. "We had an architect just at first, and he drew up the plans for quite a medium-sized house. It was all we could afford then and all I wanted. But we got so interested in the plans in magazines and papers, and in all the descriptions of houses in the books we read, that The House kept on growing and growing. We had several good tobacco years just about that time and we felt we could afford more. So, after a while, the architect got tired of putting in new rooms as we ordered them and said we were spoiling the design. Mr. Forbes said he didn't care a hang for the design, what he wanted he proposed to have; but when we decided to leave it hollow in the middle and have a court-yard like we read about in Paris houses, the architect said he wouldn't have any more to do with it. He was real excited. And who do you suppose finished it?"

"I can't imagine," said Gresham, with flattering interest.

"Father did," said Mrs. Forbes. "He can do anything he wants to do, and just talking things over with that architect had taught him more architecture than the man knew himself. Father put in that court-yard which the architect said couldn't be done, and then he put in that drying-room I showed you up-stairs, and planned for the sun-parlour outside our room. Every one says they never saw a house like it. There was quite a lot about it in the papers when we first moved in."

"I should think there might be," Gresham cried. "I have travelled about a good deal and I never saw anything so complete and comfortable."

"Only one thing we haven't got, and that is my fault," she admitted; "the only kind of room I wouldn't have was an operating-room. Mr. Forbes went to see one of his men in the hospital in the next town when he was sick there, and they showed him all over the building. He came back and wanted I should have an operating-room in The House. But I couldn't," she shuddered, "bring myself to have any."

"But you've got that little sick-room. I never saw such a jolly little place to be ill in; I believe

you can see one hundred miles from its window, and the cosy little place next door for the nurse."

"Oh, I wouldn't be without that for anything," she answered. "You haven't any idea of the number of people, for all it looks so white, that we have had there. It always hurts me a little to think that Dorothy couldn't have had the measles and whooping-cough and chicken-pox there instead of in the old house. But there," she ended, "I have talked enough about myself. Now tell me something about yourself."

Gresham was still obediently loquacious when Dot and her father returned.

CHAPTER VII

ABRAHAM PETTY intended to marry Dorothy Forbes. Such had been his intention in the September days when she, a shy uncertain little figure in a scarlet dress with a scarlet bow over one of her tear-filled eyes, hovered in the doorway of the Edgecombe schoolhouse and sucked a small pink thumb. She was six years old then; he eight; and while this difference between them remained constant, and his determination knew no change, yet other circumstances arose, as time went on, which might have seemed disparities to eyes less worldly or more humble than Abraham's. For Mr. Petty, senior, had long ago passed out of this troubled world leaving Abraham, Samantha—two years older than her brother—and the mother of these two to get on as best they might without his wisdom and advice. As he had never contributed anything else to the maintenance of the household, and as his wisdom had always been Delphic and his advice generally Quixotic, they managed much as they had done before. Mrs. Petty was still dress-maker in ordinary to the élite of Edgecombe. Abra-

ham pursued his studies—and Dorothy Forbes —through all the various grades of education until they reached, with ribbon-bound diplomas and much parental enthusiasm, the pinnacle of learning, graduation from the high school. Samantha, the only one on earth who really mourned for the futile and harmless Mr. Petty, was set apart as musical by her remaining parent, and forced to spend long hours at the piano. The uncomfortable periods of before breakfast and after supper were set aside for this torture, so that Mrs. Petty's customers might not be involved in it. Samantha wept, revolted, both in vain. Her grandfather, maternal, had left a small bequest to be used intact for the benefit of one of the children: either to make a musician of Samantha, who was supposed to have inherited the musical ability which he manifested by doleful solos upon the flute, or, Samantha's genius failing, it was to be used to establish Abraham in any business he should choose.

The old flute player's spirit was strong in his daughter. Mrs. Petty loved music as she loved nothing else. Her love was entirely inarticulate, but it was none the weaker for that. It was also a starved love: too epicurean to accept the pale flutings of her father or the uninspired correctness

of her daughter. Year by year she had laid aside some of her scant earnings, and year by year her star shone clearer over the horizon of the future. Samantha should have her grandfather's money; should go to a vague "abroad," there to "take" music in quantities as large as she could absorb, and Mrs. Petty should go with her, idle at last, and fare from concert to recital, from recital to opera, in a haze of joy whose only distinct feature—at that distance—seemed to be her own tired hands encased in white kid gloves resting idly in her lap.

That summer whose beginning was marked by the coming of the drought and of Captain Gresham was the time set down in the will for action. Samantha was then twenty-three, and if talent lay within her it must have found its voice. She was to play for three musicians of recognized repute in New York, and upon their judgment her future was to rest.

Samantha dreaded these trials and dreaded, too, the verdicts, for she shared in none of her mother's ambitions. She was really tired of music and wanted to marry an impecunious and attractive young farmer who lived a little way out of the town. Her dread of succeeding and of being forced to leave him was only equalled by her dread of failing and of meeting her mother's disappoint-

ment and reproach. Altogether she was in rather a turmoil mentally and emotionally. Abraham knew of the farmer, knew of Samantha's lack of ambition, and straightway set himself to plan a partnership with Joshua Vinney, keeper of the town store. Ever since his graduation from the high school Abraham had been Joshua's assistant. It was his pleasure and his pride, partly for convenience and partly to show the vivid hue of his shirt sleeves—he always bought the most brilliant and startling designs—to serve horse-shoe nails, buck saws and other articles to the public at Edgecombe. While the honest lady shut up in a glass case made change and entered the purchases in her book, he would engage the customers in gossip and conversation. Mr. Vinney was himself a person of deep knowledge on every subject under the sun, and with a passion for sharing these gifts with his neighbour. The young lady in the glass case was, also, gifted with a lively mind and tongue, and one side of her crystal prison was generally open so that she could exercise her conversational talents. It was, therefore, natural that Abraham should have enjoyed himself more at the store than in any other sphere, and have decided that, if his grandfather's legacy should become his, he would buy a partnership with Mr. Vinney,

marry Dot immediately and live happy ever after.

The young person in the glass case had been at school with Dot and Abraham; had known these plans of Abraham's for years and sympathised thoroughly with them. Legacy or no legacy, she thought Dot a most fortunate young woman, and Abraham in his glowing shirt sleeves, with his black hair plastered in a magnificent "cow's lick" upon his thoughtful brow, a most desirable young man.

News spread rapidly in Edgecombe, and Captain Gresham had been domiciled at the Forbes's for only one night before all the town knew of it. He would have been surprised had any one told him that his interest for the townspeople consisted chiefly in his having a "hired man" and in conjectures as to what this attaché did for him. One section of the community was of the opinion that Gresham was a lunatic, James his keeper, and that Forbes had done a mighty risky thing in admitting them to The House.

"My sakes," said the young lady in Mr. Vinney's glass case. "I should think Dot Forbes would be scared to death having a crazy man around, wouldn't you, Mr. Vinney?"

"Well," said Mr. Vinney judiciously—he was a

little old man, very bright of eye and large of nose, and his resemblance to the parrot whose cage hung among the sickles, brush-hooks, rakes and coal-scuttles was very marked—"I don't know as I can give an opinion on that. Dot Forbes ain't afraid of much."

"He didn't look crazy," Abraham submitted. "Mother says that he's got the hired man to take care of his clothes and dress him. She says she has read about it in books how Englishmen have some one to dress them."

"Do tell!" cried Rose Matilda Perkins from her conservatory; "he looks big enough to dress himself."

"But, anyway," Abraham submitted, "I'll be able to tell you more about him to-morrow. Me and mother and Samantha are going up to The House. Mrs. Forbes invited us one day last week."

"My," exclaimed Rose Matilda, "some people do have luck."

CHAPTER VIII

ABRAHAM found it difficult to formulate his opinions of the stranger. He had never seen any one quite like him, and at first he promptly set him down, as Reuben Sands had done, for a dude; and Gresham's faultless evening dress gave him some excuse for this verdict. Abraham had not often seen clothes from London's Bond Street, and he completely disapproved of them. The white waistcoat he considered absolutely improper, and the silk stockings and patent-leather pumps he found sissy in the extreme. He derived great satisfaction from the superior elegance of his own attire and trusted to Dot's good sense to prefer white-duck trousers, a cutaway coat, a blue shirt sprinkled with red horse-shoes, a large four-in-hand white tie transfixed with a bull-dog's head in gold, and pointed tan shoes. He was somewhat converted by the flavour of the cigar which Gresham offered him, and by the tan which coloured the stranger's hands and face, and made his blue eyes so surprising and incongruous; and, as the evening went on, he found himself more and more inter-

ested in the new-comer, and almost sufficiently so to ask what that unexplained hired man was for.

Gresham was as interested in Abraham as Abraham was in him; and the youth's absolute self-satisfaction, not blatant, not impertinent, but confidently founded upon a sincere belief in himself, quite entertained his new acquaintance. The hot spell had broken at last, and the evening was cool enough to make the drawing-room habitable, and Mrs. Forbes presently asked Samantha if she would play for them. Playing was not much of a novelty for the poor girl. For the last two or three years she had added to the household exchequer by playing at all the dances within a five-mile radius; but she was obedient, amiable and as self-possessed as her brother. Also, notwithstanding the impecunious farmer's views to the contrary, she took a healthy interest in the handsome visitor, and was a little piqued by his absorption in Dot Forbes, who, though perhaps better dressed, had no accomplishments. Therefore she smiled, approached the piano with confident alacrity and almost pulled its heart out with a series of deafening chords. From these she proceeded to more gentle strains; her time, her touch, her technique were all unquestionably correct and all

as amazing as was her lack of any feeling or any talent.

Again Gresham marvelled. This was as far as possible removed from the inane drawing-room performances to which he was accustomed—the girl had everything which conscientious work could give her. He moved to a chair from which he could see her face and watched her. Her attention was miles away, perhaps dallying with the young farmer, and her performance was absolutely mechanical. She crashed to the end, then rose and went back to a seat beside her mother amid a buzz of general applause. When Gresham came up to thank her, she listened to him silently, indifferently; but Mrs. Petty detained him, invited him by a gesture of a hand not yet encased in white kid to take an empty seat on the sofa beside her.

"I have been thinking," she began, "that Samantha has learnt about all she can from her teacher down at Hartford."

"Who *is* her teacher?" asked Gresham. "She is amazingly well taught."

"Well, for the last year," said Mrs. Petty, "she has been taking lessons off a German gentleman in Hartford—his name is Grote; but he's a real pleasant gentleman—came up here once and spent

a Sunday with us. You remember him, don't you, Mrs. Forbes?"

"I do, indeed," Mrs. Forbes answered. "I shall never forget him, nor how wonderfully he played on the organ. That's one of the reasons I like to have ministers stay here; sometimes some of them can play the organ, and I'd rather listen to that than almost anything else. You see, Captain Gresham," she went on, "it did seem rather foolish to have a whole music-room just for a piano, so we had an organ built in. Some people say it's a very good one."

"It's a beautiful one," said Mrs. Petty. "Well, and so Mr. Grote says he can't go much further with Samantha, and I'm planning to take her abroad next year;" and she went on to tell him of the terms of her father's will.

"Of course," said Gresham, when she appealed to him, "I cannot undertake to give an opinion. But if you should ever be in Leipsic, get her to take a few lessons from an old chap there, called Professor Emil Berger, at the Conservatory. He taught me," said Gresham, falling back upon his favourite phrase, "no end of dodges."

"Then you play!" cried Mrs. Forbes in amazement. "You never told us."

"You never asked me," parried Gresham. "But to prove that I can be frank, I will undertake to play your organ for you if you'd care to have me."

Well, he played. First the piano, then the organ, and he played with such ease and grace and feeling as drew the difficult tears to Mrs. Petty's eyes, almost reconciled Samantha to music as a profession, and induced Abraham, in a fit of geniality, to invite Gresham to come down to the store and look over some new hardware catalogues lately arrived from Chicago.

The Forbeses were naturally delighted at the success of the evening and the prowess of their guest, and even Reuben Sands, standing out in the soft darkness with the other servants, forgave the mustard-coloured garments and forgot the eye-glass.

Mrs. Petty enjoyed herself so thoroughly, and abandoned herself so absolutely to the pleasures of the moment, that it was not until she had retired to her black-walnut bedstead, and was dropping off to sleep, that a terrible realisation came to her. That—that was talent; musical talent. There was love and ease and understanding in that young man's playing. There were none of these things in Samantha's.

CHAPTER IX

IT had never been Mrs. Petty's habit to put off the evil day or moment. Life's crises were as so many dresses to her. She cut into them and finished them as soon as possible. So, within a day or two, she took Samantha to New York and heard the verdict she had dreaded and which the girl received with veiled relief; and Abraham, as soon as his rise in fortune was revealed to him, went straightway to The House and asked Dot Forbes to marry him. He was eloquent upon what he would do for her, upon how happy he would make her, upon how much he loved her; but, not being wise in the ways of women, he omitted to tell her how much he needed her and how much she could do for him.

"You see," he ended, after urging his own more personal view-point—"you see, it ain't as if you'd have to go away from your folks. We'd go right on here living at Edgecombe, and you'd see your pa and ma every day. Maybe you're thinking somewhat of marrying a foreigner. I ain't goin' no nearer than that. Well, don't you do it. You read in the papers what happened to all them

tony girls what went and got spliced with dukes and earls and such. No, siree, what you want to do is to marry somebody you know all about, somebody that went to school with you. I am awful glad mother decided just when she did. It was worrying me some to have this English feller always round ye and me not ready to say a word, but I guess it 'll be different now. He's a nice feller, I ain't sayin' nothin' against him; but he ain't like I am to ye. He ain't loved ye ever since you was a little tad, and he ain't built his whole life on ye, like I have."

"But, dear Abraham," cried Dot distressedly.

"Now, don't you say anything in a heated moment as you'd be sorry for afterward," he warned her. "I don't want no answer from you to-day. You just take a week to think it over, and by that time you will think like I do. Your pa knows how I feel, he's knowed right along, I guess, and I don't believe he'd make me any trouble. There ain't a feller in Edgecombe doing better than I am, or attending more strictly to business. And I love you, Dot. I've told you how I love ye, and I want ye to take that week to think it over. Don't let Gresham distract you. You keep right on thinkin' of all the things I've told ye."

"But, Abraham—" Dot began again.

And again he stopped her—would not listen to her then, and went away in great heat and hurry. Upon his way back to Joshua Vinney's store he encountered the leisurely Gresham and accosted him with:

"Say, Cap'n, I want to tell ye somethin' between man and man. You know Dot Forbes?" Gresham nodded. "Well, her and me is thinking of getting married."

"Indeed," said Gresham, overcoming some surprise, and then courteously, "Pray accept my congratulations. She is very charming, and I am sure you will be very happy."

"Oh, well," Abraham admitted, "I guess it ain't got to the congratulation period yet. We are just thinking about it. I've been thinking about it 'most as long as I've been alive, but she only started on it this afternoon. I have just been up and proposed," he explained, "and she agreed to think it over for a week. Thought I'd better tell ye, so that if she seems sort of quiet sometimes, you'll know it ain't anything personal to you. She'll just be thinking of me, that's all. Of course a young lady has to think quite a lot about a proposal from a young gentleman like me. Don't get 'em often. There ain't—as I've tried

to make her understand—there ain't a young man in Edgecombe more respected than what I am, so that if she seems kind of thoughtful, you just let her be, will ye?"

"I will," promised Gresham.

"And say, Cap'n," pursued the eager lover, "if you was talking with her and didn't know what else to talk about, you might tell her what you think of me. She'd be interested."

"Are you sure that my opinion of you would be of assistance?"

"Sure! You know what girls are. They hardly listen to what their folks and their friends tell 'em, and along comes some yap they know nothing about, and they take him for gospel. Present company," added Abraham, generally and vaguely, "always excepted."

"You are very kind."

"Don't mention it. You're welcome," answered the lover pleasantly. He had a convction that every social amenity could be answered by one of these phrases, and when he was in doubt he used both and allowed his interlocutor to choose between them.

"I did think some," he now proceeded, "of havin' you go away for a spell, but I've about decided that ain't necessary."

"I'm glad you reached that decision," said Gresham, with a suspicious quietness.

"No, it ain't necessary," Abraham assured him. "We can fix it without that. I guess you won't bother Dot none. How d' you like the old lady?"

"I find Mrs. Forbes charming," answered Gresham.

"An' John Forbes is all right, too. He's a mighty smart man. Real entertaining when he wants to be. You can go round with the old folks for a few days. An' say, when you ain't got one of them to talk to, you can come down to the store. You'd like Mr. Vinney, and the parrot is real lively. Miss Perkins would admire to know you," he added as a final inducement. "She's real lively, too. An' maybe some of the neighbours would drop in. We'd make it pleasant for you. Of course you know how we feel about Britishers, but seeing as you're my friend you'd get along all right."

A spasm of what Abraham accepted as humble appreciation of Edgecombe's nobility crossed Gresham's face.

"I'll come and talk to the parrot," he decided as one feeling himself unfit for higher things.

"All right," Abraham answered. "I'm real

glad to have you up to The House," he assured the alien. "You do just as I say. You leave Dot be, except when you're talking to her about me. But don't say nothing to the old folks. I'll tend to them myself."

"It might be better," Gresham acquiesced.

"John Forbes *will* be tickled," Abraham mused aloud. "I guess he must worry some about what 'll happen to his business and the women folk when he's gone. An' he's nearly forty-eight. He'd better worry. But if he knows I'm on the job, tending to things, he'll go easier."

"Quite so. But about this business of your own, now? Would you be giving that up?"

"Give up nothing! Say, what do you think I am. I can run all the businesses I want to. Us trained business men is like that. It takes John Forbes all his time to run one woollen mill and a few fields of tobacco. That's because John Forbes ain't trained. He'd ought to have went through high school and into hardware like I done. A man what's in hardware comes in contact with all the businesses there is. Ever think of that?"

Gresham hadn't.

"Well, just think of it now," Abraham advised. "I'd like to stay and hear you talk some

more, but I can't leave the store alone. So long."

"And a great deal longer," Gresham determined, as he pulled his cap down over his eyes and set out in the direction of a cool-looking grove, to whose exploration he was proceeding when the confidential Abraham waylaid him.

CHAPTER X

THE cool beauty of that wooded space was largely lost upon Gresham. Abraham's assurance must, he told himself, be founded upon some encouragement. Inexplicable though it seemed to him, the girl must have given the fellow some reason to hope. And then he found comfort, for somehow the thought of Dot's marrying the boor distressed him, in the remembrance of Petty's speech about Forbes. Surely he had no encouragement for considering himself an acceptable son-in-law in the eyes of that gentleman. Not even the top of his smooth and empty head had ever appeared over the horizon of Forbes's attention. The evening of the Pettys' visit had already shown Gresham so much and Forbes had only that day expressed very different hopes and plans for his daughter's future.

They had been discussing the proper time for "topping" tobacco. "It's a question of feeling, of color," said Forbes. "It can't be taught, and I've never learned it. A man who knows can tell just by looking off over the field and sniffing the

air. A man who doesn't know couldn't tell with a microscope. As I say, I never could get it. I just leave it to my daughter. She can tell every time. She learned the trick from an old darky we used to have. He is dead now, but when Dot was little there was no holiday for her like a day with Uncle Noah. Poor little girl," he went on somewhat remorsefully, "I don't believe she's had very much of a bringing up. Mother and I never did hold much with the system of sending young girls away off by themselves to learn all the wickedness of a big city in those fashionable boarding schools. She was all we had, and we didn't feel like having her educated away from us. So we kept her right here and sent her to school with the rest of the town children, and her mother tended to the fashionable part. She's a Palmer, you know, Mis' Forbes is," he explained, as who should say, "The blood of all the Howards flows in those veins!"

Gresham was properly impressed.

"Yes, she's a Palmer. She's a Colonial Dame and a Daughter of the Revolution, both in good standing, and yet she's the sweetest woman in the world."

Gresham agreed heartily in this last description of his hostess, though her other qualifications

rather puzzled him. Nevertheless, he expressed his appreciation of them in a vague but satisfying "Fancy now!" and Forbes went on:

"Yes, sir, mother's a Daughter of the Revolution, and I was asking her only last night what she thought the chapter would say when they heard she's been harbouring a Red Coat?"

"Ah! but you see," Gresham pointed out, "we've all taken to khaki!"

"But I was telling you about my little girl," Forbes resumed. "Well, she got book learning at school, her mother has watched out for her manners and her general character, and she's had a good business training with her old dad. She's got a natural talent for business, that child has, and her opinion on a set of account books is worth having, I tell you. Just lands on things—and right every time."

"I should have said," commented Gresham, "that she is remarkably well educated."

"Along certain lines she is. But outside of them she knows nothing. Nothing about the world. Nothing about men and women. We never encouraged her to be very intimate with any particular girl friend. She's had dozens of 'em staying at The House, but we never wanted her to go visiting round much. Friends are all right,

but friends' friends may be almost anything. So we tried to make it so pleasant for her at home that it wouldn't bother her to stay there. Folks thought we was funny about her, but I hope it will turn out all right. She'll come right up when we take her travelling."

"Then you're going to travel."

"For a year or two. We always planned we would as soon as Dot was through school. But business sort of took hold of me and mother was having the pergola and the conservatory built that spring. The next year she had the roof stained and the parquet floors put down. That was last year. An' this year? Well, I don't know how it is. We just didn't get started."

"Most luckily for me."

Forbes nodded. "But I guess we'll be returning your call next year," he laughed. "Daughter has *got* to see the world; bump up against people —good and bad—and I propose to be there with the arnica bottle when she looks for the bruises. I'll start her on her own country. She ought to see the places where we made our history, and where we're making it now. And then we'll cross over. I guess we'll have a good time if we ever get started. I've got some good men here with me, and I can keep in touch with them.

Yes," he ended, with rueful determination, "I guess we'll *have* to make it next year."

Could anything, Gresham reflected, clash with these plans more thoroughly than Abraham Petty's? Upon Dot's marriage the whole fabric would collapse. It had struck Gresham as strange even while Mr. Forbes was setting forth his intention that the contingency of his daughter falling in love and leaving him never seemed to occur to her masterful father. How, Gresham wondered, would he receive Mr. Petty's pretensions? If that ardent suitor phrased them to the father-in-law of his choosing as he had just phrased them to his unsympathetic confidant, Gresham could imagine the result of the last portion of them. It was an amusing little comedy, the spectator told himself. Stage father, ingenue daughter, comic lover and complacent mother: all had played their parts well in the first act, and it behooved him to return to The House where the second scene was, doubtless, even now set. The play was interesting, but was it quite a comedy? The lover was such a bounder and the heroine so much too good for him. His hope lay all with the stage father. There seemed to be no hero to save the situation; no young Lochinvar coming out of the West. But it never did to take too much for

granted in these things that life and love wrote. Those authors, old enough surely to know better, broke all the rules of art. They laughed at the unities and ignored the "structure of the drama" so laboriously built up by the critics.

So Lord Gresham finding that his pipe was out and his last match gone, went back to his place in the audience.

CHAPTER XI

HE had scant time to change into his evening things before dinner. This custom he retained in spite of his host's laughing dissuasion. Mr. Forbes dined in whatever seemed cool and adapted for lounging. But in the face of Mrs. Forbes Gresham read another verdict. It was eminently fitting, she was convinced, that the occupant of a "suite for guest with own maid or valet" should live up to the demands of fashionable life. Also the guest's formal costume seemed to demand something festive in the array of his hostesses, and to this demand Mrs. Forbes and her daughter were ready and glad to respond. Their plaint was never that they had nothing to wear. It was rather for excuses to wear what they had, and a considerable element of the pleasure they derived from Gresham's society was that every evening he furnished such excuse.

And nightly he sat in the softly lighted dining-room and marvelled. Such perfect service and appointments, such charming women and such stimulating conversation he might have looked for in Newport or New York. And looked, per-

haps, in vain. Mrs. Forbes and Dot in their soft chiffons and laces were even prettier than in their daytime attire, and Gresham had met many a man of importance in the commerce of the world who lacked the human sympathy, the humorous insight and the kindly philosophy of John Forbes. He was growing accustomed to the peculiarity of accent and intonation which had at first repelled him, and was finding interest and instruction in the terse, expressive use of word and phrase which gave to the English language almost the idiomatic richness and rapidity of the French.

The second act of the drama was, indeed, in progress when Gresham returned to the porch. Dorothy and her father were on the stage, and Gresham saw, to his dismay, that Dorothy had been crying. Nay, she was even then crying, and the attempt at self-control which she made upon sight of Gresham proved quite ineffectual. She wept forlornly.

"Now, baby," her father admonished her, "it's perfect nonsense for you to go on like this. He had no business to come up here bothering you, and I'll leave it to Captain Gresham. . . ."

"No, no, dad," Dorothy suddenly articulate, implored. "You must not tell Captain Gresham; you really mustn't."

But Forbes went on quite unperturbed. "I'll leave it to Captain Gresham if there was anything in your manner—as you say there must have been —to young Petty the other night to encourage that puppy to come up this afternoon and propose, simply because Samantha has broken her mother's heart and he's got a few measly dollars."

Gresham, finding himself suddenly invested with a part in the play, threw himself into it with characteristic ardour. If he were to be confidential brother or bachelor uncle he was resolved to make a success of it.

"Nothing whatever," was his encouraging decision. "My dear Miss Forbes, I wouldn't let it trouble me for a moment. The man's impertinence is insane."

"That's what I tell her," cried Mr. Forbes, putting an arm round his agitated companion in the large chair. "That's what I was telling her just as you came up. The money's turned him crazy, that's all, and he had to come up here and work it off."

"No, no, no," said Dot, shaking her head forlornly. "I must have said something to him to make him believe that I cared. Why, father, he seemed just so *sure*."

When Gresham heard this, his own uncharitable

reading of the situation, set forth in a tearful voice by the culprit, he fell upon it tooth and nail and rent it.

"I am sure you did nothing of the sort. The chap is balmy"—he caught a wet glance of question in Dot's eyes and explained—"mad, you know, I mean, about himself. Why, I met him down in the village and he seems to consider himself a mixture of Apollo, Minerva, Napoleon and your Pierpont Morgan here—irresistible and all-powerful is his estimate of himself."

"Yes, that's just it," wailed Dot. "I can't make him see; he wouldn't understand. He *would* give me a week to think it over in, and I know he's quite sure of what my answer will be."

"There, there, there, baby," soothed her father. "You sha'n't have to answer him at all. I'll attend to that. I guess he's not the first young man I've had to attend to in just that way, and I don't know as I can hope that he'll be the last."

"I am afraid you can't," smiled Gresham; and Dot found heart enough to smile a sad, wet little smile.

"But you won't tell him, dear," she pleaded, "until the week is up. It might seem sort of unkind, you know. If he likes to think what he does we might as well let him think so for a week."

Mrs. Forbes hurried out at this moment to say that Dot was wanted at the telephone.

"Who is it?" the girl asked, still under the shelter of her father's shadow. "Who wants me, mother?"

"Abraham Petty, for one," chuckled John Forbes.

"Yes, it is Abraham. How did you guess it?" cried his wife.

"I'll go and attend to his business," said Forbes grimly. "You stay out here, honeybunch, and get your eyes cooled off a bit. Why, Abraham Petty ain't worth crying about. You hear what Captain Gresham thinks of him, don't you?"

Gresham had very promptly kept his word to the bucolic lover.

CHAPTER XII

STILL in their rôles of confidential uncle and ingenue heroine, Gresham and Dot went out among the roses in the pergola after dinner that evening. Dot was still a little shaken and downcast, and Gresham was still indignant and protective. Moods could not fit one another more neatly, and Dot found herself greatly soothed and energetically championed.

"But about this week now?" said Gresham, when other aspects of the affair had received their due attention. "About leaving this chap in happy ignorance for a week—I don't like that, you know."

"No?" queried Dot.

"No," repeated Gresham. "Of course the chap's a cad and a bounder and all that, but I wouldn't do a thing like that to a dog. It's cruel, it's dastardly, it takes the very heart out of a man to be told at the end that all the time he was planning and hoping and building castles in the air the woman had been quite decided to have nothing to do with him or his castles. For God's sake, Miss Forbes, don't do it. Tell the brute to-morrow. Let me, let your father, let anybody

tell him, telephone to him, send him a telegram, do anything except let him go on hoping that you cared. In his case it is believing that you cared, when all the time you don't."

"Why, of course, Captain Gresham, I will have dad tell him to-morrow if you feel that way. I just hoped it would seem more polite to let him think I was thinking it over, and then he could say to himself, 'She refused me in the end, but it took her a week to make up her mind.' That's better than, 'I asked her, but she wouldn't think of it.' But, of course, I'll do as you think best. Dad shall tell him to-morrow; and now, please, Mr. Gresham, talk to me about something else; take my mind off Abraham."

"If you will suggest the subject," he challenged her, "I will talk. What would you like?"

"Well, there is us," said Dot. "At least, there's you. I guess you've heard all there is to hear about me; but tell me something about yourself. I was at a luncheon the other day, and the girls were asking me about you, and I was surprised to find how little I really knew. Where do you live? Tell me about your home."

"No, no," said Gresham, "don't let me begin about my home. That's one of my enthusiasms; I should bore you dreadfully about it."

"Bore me," she replied, "you couldn't; I have never been bored in my life."

This was so startlingly at variance with the mental attitude of most of his friends that Gresham paused to consider it, and in the pause Dot fell to considering him. She was not given to much thought of things that did not concern her nearly, and this guest of her father's had not before struck her as a very human sort of person, certainly she had not thought of him as a possible friend of her own. He was too old for that, too absorbed and, for all his gaiety and friendliness, too impersonal. Now, however, in the glamour of the moonlight, he seemed quite transformed. His years—they were perhaps thirty-five—fell from him. He began to assume a certain romantic interest. She had never seen him in earnest about anything except this question of Abraham, and somehow his earnestness seemed to bring him nearer. She wondered whether his continual gaiety were a pose, whether he was ever lonely or disheartened or enthusiastic like other people, and she wondered, too, why he kept himself hedged in by that manner of careless insincerity.

"Tell me," she repeated, this time more earnestly —"tell me something about your home," and she settled herself more comfortably upon her bench,

and made room for him beside her. He declined the proffered place.

"If you don't mind," said he, "I'll stand or walk about. Talking about the dear old place always makes me restless. Well, to begin with, it's very old. It's a sort of Sir Walter Scottish castle. It used to have a moat and a portcullis, and a jolly little balcony up at the top for throwing boiling oil on one's uninvited guests, and it has belonged to us—the Greshams—for hundreds and hundreds of years. In fact, the Greshams built it. The Greshams have also been going on for some hundreds of years, you see. Well, of course, lately they haven't used the portcullis much, and the boiling oil gallery is one of the gardener's great points of vantage. He fills it every spring with creepers that sway and blossom up there in the air. Awfully jolly they look. Then inside there's any amount of oak panelling and old pictures and long passages and a great centre hall where all the retainers slept in the merry old days when if the lords of the manor didn't take care of their men the enemy might ride up and drive them away, leaving the lord of the manor rather up a tree. Quite cut off from going to war or crusading or sacking foreign towns and neighbouring castles. It's a truly wonderful old hall,

though of course it's changed a bit since those times. My father built an organ into one end of it, and we generally dine there."

"Have you a ghost?" asked Dot.

"Oh, several," he answered proudly; "and we have an old Norman crypt and one proud legend all of our own."

"Tell me that," Dot commanded.

"Well," he began, "once upon a time, back in the mists of history, there was a big fight all over the country. It was chronic, you know, and the Greshams were always in it. In those days we had a very adventuresome queen; great, I should say, on women's suffrage and 'swords for women' and all that. One morning she got into a tight place rowing it with a neighbour of ours, and when things began to go against her she made a bolt for our castle. Now, my greatest grandfather was away sacking, I think, and my greatest grandmother, who was in command of the castle, was not a suffragette. So she wouldn't open the door, she wouldn't let the portcullis fall. And the lady outside was awfully waxy about it. She went off to her own house in no end of a huff, gathered more soldiers and bowmen together, came back to Glendaire, knocked spots out of the old lady there, and carried off the son and heir as

hostage. Her first idea was to boil him in oil—her second was to bury him alive; but he was a nice boy—the Greshams are often nice at very early ages."

"I can believe that," laughed Dot.

"Well, this was at an exceedingly early age, nine hundred and something, as well as I remember, and the young Gresham was perfectly charming. So the old lady relented and restored him to his own people on condition that they never again would refuse welcome and sanctuary to any one who demanded them."

"That's a lovely story," cried his audience.

"But that's not the end of it," said he. "From that day to this the Greshams have dined in the big hall and the door is always left open and a place is always laid for a stranger."

"Does he often come?" questioned Dot.

"Not often," he admitted. "But we're always ready, you know. We're people of our word, we Greshams, and we still keep our greatest grandmother's promise."

"I think," said Dorothy in all sincerity, "that that's the loveliest thing I ever heard of. My! but I'd love to go walking up some evening and surprise you all. Now, tell me another story!"

"About Glendaire?" he questioned.

"Yes, about Glendaire."

"Ages and ages ago," he began, "no one knows how long ago, though we've had the opinion of several botanical duffers, some one, I've heard it was St. Patrick, planted a yew tree in our garden, and prophesied that for so long as that tree should live our house should rule. When it dies, we die too. It's an awful thought, that while we're sitting here—or rather while you're sitting there, and I'm making you restless by tramping up and down in front of you—at this very moment a thunder-storm may be raging over there and cutting me off in the flower of my youth."

"A caterpillar would do as well," suggested Dorothy buoyantly. "Most deaths nowadays are caused by germs one way or another. But let's pretend the tree is all right. Tell me more about the place. Is there a garden?"

"A garden," he laughed; "there's every kind of a garden, or, if you prefer it, there's a garden of every kind. Fruit and vegetable, flower, water and winter; glass houses with peaches and grapes and things like that in them."

"Go on, go on," she cried. "Go on, my mind is quite off Abraham."

"There are terraces," he obeyed, "laid out colour by colour like a rainbow. The moat has been

filled in in parts, and in parts made to bear water lilies; then there are fountains and ponds and the stables—you'd love the stables, and the poor old house itself all battered in spots, but still beautiful with its twinkling windows and its flags and all, and the gardens and plantations framing it in. There—" he broke off and laughed at his own enthusiasm, "I have cracked the thing up a bit. Now I'll stop."

"But that isn't the way to stop," cried Dot. "Those aren't the last words of your speech. You must say, 'Dost thou like the picture?'"

"Well, dost thou?" demanded Gresham, feeling that she was quite right and that his rhapsody had indeed been like Claude Melnotte's.

"Go on," she commanded; "begin at that part: 'While the perfumed light stole through the mists of alabaster lamps.'"

"Oh! I don't know it," he answered.

"I do," she cried. "Our dramatic society gave it the last year I was at school. It goes like this. You say:

"'And every air was heavy with the sighs
Of orange-groves and music from sweet lutes,
And murmurs of low fountains that gush forth
I' the midst of roses! Dost thou like the picture?'

"Then I say:

> "'Oh! as the bee upon the flower, I hang
> Upon the honey of thy eloquent tongue!
> Am not I blest? And if I love too wildly,
> Who would not love thee like Pauline?'

"Then you say:

> "'Oh, false one,
> It is the prince thou lovest, not the man.'

"Now, you know, I'd much rather have a man than a prince."

"Really?"

"Yes, really—I shouldn't know how to talk to a prince. They make very bad friends, you know. You can't trust 'em."

"And do you think," he asked, "that you could make a friend of me?"

"I have," she answered.

And later, when they returned to the veranda and found Mr. and Mrs. Forbes hand in hand in the moonlight, Dot threw herself down beside her mother's chair.

"We've been having the heavenliest time," she breathed. "Captain Gresham can make believe better than any one I ever knew."

"Any one could—on such a stage," said Lord Gresham.

"He's been pretending to be a lordship," Dot announced. "I wish you could hear him talk."

Forbes looked suddenly at Gresham. "He ought to do it all right," he commented. "It's a great night for fancies. 'In such a night,'" he began,

> "'Did Thisbe fearfully o'erstep the dew
> And saw the lion's shadow ere himself.'"

Again Lord Gresham marvelled. Here in the home of an American artisan he found the classics in full bloom. Not laid away in calf-skin and vellum, as he was accustomed to think of them, but playing their part in the ordinary converse of life. And he noticed that whereas Dorothy and her father took liberties with the verbs and final consonants of colloquial phrase, their pronunciaation of Shakespeare and Lytton was singularly free from error or accent. The term "self-made" was changing its significance for him.

CHAPTER XIII

DOT thought a good deal about Gresham before she fell asleep that night. That he had been inventing was, of course, understood. Sustained invention of that sort had always been a favourite pastime of hers. But the readiness with which he did it, the glibness with which he described that wonderful old castle and its hall, made her think that he had perhaps at some time in his wanderings seen such a place. She wished she might see it too. It would be more interesting than places better known and more written up. The open door and the old yew tree appealed to her imagination marvellously, and the rainbow terraces were much in her dreams. Sometimes she was toiling up them while some giant Gresham pursued her; sometimes she was strolling down them while some charming Gresham wooed her. It was a lovely play, she decided, and could hardly wait for breakfast and the business of the morning to be over before she captured Gresham. That young hero, having parted with his secret, was

rather ruefully wishing it back again, and was delighted to find that she had accepted his confidence as a superior sort of joke.

"Let's play Glendaire again," said Dot, when she found her guest in the library trying to write a letter. "I think it's great. I'm going to ask dad to let us have that open-door scheme here."

"You have something very like it already," he answered gratefully. "When I think of Mr. Kenny——"

"Don't," Dot cautioned him. "Think of Glendaire. Tell me more about it."

"I've told you all, I can no more," he quoted incorrectly. "Unless, of course, I gossip."

"About the neighbours?"

"And about the rest of us. I'm not the only Gresham. I'm only the head of the house."

"That's the way I like you to talk," she interrupted. "Just wait until I get my embroidery and then we'll play we're Mrs. Humphry Ward's people. Of course I ought to 'clasp my slender blue-veined hands behind my head and look pensively out at the rain-swept garden,' but we'll leave that part out. I haven't time to. It's a lovely day. And my veins don't show. But you're all right. Are those clothes 'tweeds'?"

"They are."

"Then we're off. You were saying that you're only the head of the house. Who are the arms and legs?"

"My brother John is its right hand. Even before the governor died——"

"Eh?"

"My father, you know. Even before he died he had discovered what a chap John was for landscape gardening and that sort of thing, and managing. So he let John have everything his own way. Since I came into the thing I've let him go on. He's a queer, moody chap. A twin of mine, and he's always been more or less delicate."

"Your only brother?"

"Yes."

"Any sisters?"

"No! Nothing but a mother and the stepfather she has presented to us in our old age. An awfully decent old chap."

"I don't see," commented Dorothy admiringly, "how you keep it up so well. You've invented a whole family for yourself in just a few minutes."

"It's no trouble at all," he assured her. "Look at your friend, Claude Melnotte. Look at the papers any day. But I've come to the end of the family."

"Except for the ancestors. Tell me about some of them."

Spurred by her interest and by the license which her incredulity furnished, Lord Gresham searched his memory for genealogy. He was wide and catholic in his choice of anecdotes; anything of sufficient antiquity was thankfully received and picturesquely presented. Strongbow, Sir Uland's daughter, Brian Boru, Shane O'Niel and Dermott McMurrogh were thrown into the branches of his family tree whence they looked down at Dorothy with as much amazement as she looked up at them.

Many a tale of chivalry and pride did Lord Gresham pour into her appreciative ear. Ghosts and banshees made fit subjects for the dark of the moon. Never, Dot decided, had she encountered such an imagination. But of all the subjects with which it played she loved most to hear about Glendaire. He added detail unto detail until she could see the pictures on the walls, the flowers, the lawns, the wide soft meadows. He made her feel the spacious graciousness of its wide domain.

"You've almost," she told him once, "made me believe in it—made me feel that it's real; not a place that only you and I know about. And it's all mine. You made it for me, didn't you?"

"If I could show it to you!"

"But you have. I can see it plainly, 'In my mind's eye.' When you think of it, what country do you put it in? I always leave it in Spain."

"I put it in Ireland."

"In Ireland," Dot repeated; "that's a funny place to have a castle of dreams."

"It's a very good place for an Irishman's. Where would you expect me to have it—adjoining Buckingham Palace?"

"Oh! But you're not an Irishman."

"But I am," he maintained.

"Oh, no, you're not," she laughed. "I can remember word for word what the geography at school said about Ireland." She stood up, folded her hands behind her and recited in sing-song fashion: "Ireland, a small island in the North Sea. The country consists of barren mountains and boggy valleys. On the former the peasants graze their miserable cattle, from the latter they obtain a sort of turf or peat which they use for fires. They are a dirty and ignorant people, living in huts which they share with their domestic animals. Now, you don't look," she pointed out, "as though you lived in a hut with domestic animals."

"Have you never known any Irish people," Gresham asked seriously.

"Never," she answered, matter of fact at once. "All the help in this town is either German or coloured."

"Help?" repeated Gresham. "Help?"

"Yes, help," she answered. "Servants, you know. In some towns there are Irish, but we've never had any of them here. I guess no one would be willing to try it."

"And do you mean to say," demanded Gresham hotly, "that you believe that? That you mean to insinuate that only servants can be expected to come from one of the dearest, oldest, most beautiful and most unhappy countries in the world."

"Now, see," she urged. "Don't let us talk nonsense any more. I'll pretend as much as you like about Glendaire and your family and all. That's a good game. But don't pretend that Ireland is that kind of place—dear and beautiful—and that you come from it. I've read lots and lots of books about it. I've read Thackeray's 'Irish Sketches.'"

"Oh! Thackeray be——"

"Well, perhaps he is," she suggested, with the irreverence which so often amazed him. "But all the books are about Biddies and Micks and Pats."

"My name is Pat," he announced belligerently.

"What?" she cried. "What did you say?"

"My name is Pat," he repeated. "Patrick Gresham."

"Well, now I *know* you're Glendaireing. I've known your first name all the time."

"Then what is it?"

"Lord. I remember your name in the papers: Captain Lord Gresham. I know a girl called Carrie Lord. She used to go to school with me."

"That's one of my titles. The one I used in the army," he explained.

But at this she only laughed again, and she was still enjoying what she considered his attempt at consistent local colour when some domestic duty called her away.

CHAPTER XIV

ABRAHAM PETTY came no more to The House after the day of his meeting with Pat, and no one spoke of him, until one evening when Gresham and Dot were in the summer house and he asked what had become of that over-confident suitor.

"Oh, he's all right again," laughed Dot. "I met him to-day, and he seems to have thought I proposed to him, and that he was forced to refuse. He tells me that six other girls—I liked being included—are competing for him, and that he has to be very careful. 'He isn't,' he says, 'going to be snapped up.'" Pat laughed.

"He's the most preposterous bounder," said he, "that I ever encountered."

"You couldn't hurt his feelings with an axe," Dot amplified. "And I've often wondered why you were so excited about him, and so anxious that he should not be left in suspense. You really were," she laughed, "quite bossy about it."

"I'm afraid I expected him to take the thing more as I did!"

"As you did?" she repeated. "Did any one ever treat you that way?"

"Keep me in suspense? Oh, yes. But then, you see, I didn't know it. I thought everything was all right. And instead, don't you know——?"

"But I don't know," she complained. "Are you playing Glendaire now?"

"No, there's no Glendaire about it—I wish there were."

Dot looked at him for a moment to make sure that he was in earnest. "Tell me about it," she begged, "that is, if you wouldn't mind—if it wouldn't hurt you. Was it long ago?"

"Long enough," he answered, "since I fell in love with her. But only nine or ten months since I came back from the front and heard that she had changed her mind very soon after she saw the last of me, and that she had decided to marry a richer and, I hope, a better fellow. She'd gone on writing to me and letting me write to her, but she never mentioned her change of heart because, she said, she feared it might grieve me. I really think that it was because she was afraid it would bring me back to England. And perhaps it gave her a sort of romantic glamour in her friends' eyes to be getting letters from the front. You can imagine the attitude: 'What I love best I give to my coun-

try.' And you see if I'd been potted by a nigger she need never have told a soul. She'd have worn that pathetic glamour forever. So she let me do what I didn't want you to let this fool of an Abraham do—she let me believe for the whole two years of my service that she would marry me, and all the time her mind was quite made up to do nothing of the kind, but to marry Lord Harvey instead; and she did. He was a great catch."

"Lord Harvey! Then she was Lady Clarissa Paine," cried Dot in amazement. "We read about her wedding."

"Ah!" said Gresham tritely, "I forgot the Sunday papers. Yes! she was the Lady Clarissa Paine, and she's now Lady Harvey—a much more important personage than ever the Countess of Glamoran could have been."

"Then you," cried Dot in rising amazement, "then you *are* the Earl of Glamoran."

"As I told you."

"But how could she choose him instead of you? I have seen pictures of him and of her too. She was lovely. Why, Captain Gresham," and then she halted and tried the new name unsteadily. "Why, Earl— No! that isn't right. What is the right thing to call you?"

"Pat," he answered valiantly. "Call me Pat."

"Oh! but I couldn't," she wailed. "It's all different now. There isn't any such person in the world as Captain Gresham. This was the dream place, this the joke. Glendaire and all those things I thought you were inventing were the truth. You're really an earl, and I," she laughed unsteadily—"well I guess I'm the goat. Everything's spoiled. Everything's different, and oh!" she broke out suddenly, "what will dad say? He hates peers."

"He's known all about it all along," Pat made reply. "He doesn't mind." It was rather an unusual situation he thought. Here he was trying to explain away his rank as though it were a crime. "And I thought, Miss Forbes," he went on, "I really thought that you understood. You know how often we've talked about Ireland and my place there."

At the news of her father's defection Dot began to cry. The very foundations of her world were breaking up. That her father should have countenanced this deceit! This was what people meant when they railed at the deceitfulness of man. Her father and her friend had both been laughing at her.

Gresham tried to comfort her, but she was beyond comfort. She had been made ridiculous

in her own eyes, and she was too young to bear that. Anything else she might have forgiven, but——

"I'm the goat," she wailed and refused comfort or explanation.

CHAPTER XV

"IT'S all very well for you to say 'Dear me' and to laugh at me like that," said Dot, "but what I need is sympathy—not ridicule."

"Dear me," repeated her father. "I had no idea you were serious."

"None of that, sir! none of that!" his daughter admonished him. "You always know it's serious when I wait until the house is quiet, and then creep down like a nihilist to entertain you over your last cigar. And now you've aided and abetted and let me laugh and make game of a person out of history. He says he's been going on for hundreds and hundreds of years."

"Earldom founded 1465, barons before that," her father interjected. "I had it looked up in the city."

"And never told us," his daughter charged him severely. "You've let mother and me go on treating him like an ordinary planter."

"Well, daughter," Forbes pointed out, "that's all he is, to us."

"And you have known all along," she accused him.

"That his name is Patrick Gresham," answered Forbes. "That he is the Earl of Glamoran. That he has a seat in the House of Lords which he never occupies, and that he has about forty thousand acres of the worst land in Ireland, and two or three thousand of the worst tenants. That's all I know except that he's in business in London, besides, and is as rich as any one would want to be."

"As rich as you?"

"I guess so. Maybe he couldn't realise as quick as I could, but he's got the goods, all right."

"And how long," she demanded, "have you known all these things about him? Did Mr. Elliott write them to you?"

"No," he answered. "No. Elliott introduced him simply as Captain Gresham. He told me who he was the first night he was here, and if you and mother read your Sunday papers carefully, you'd have known too. See here!" and he handed her a society sheet of the preceding Sunday's *New York Herald*, "that tells about him."

"The Earl of Glamoran," this invaluable social authority announced, "is at present travelling in America studying methods of tobacco culture. His lordship, though patriotic and enthusiastic about his country, can hardly be described as a typical Irishman. He shows none of the *dolce*

far niente which is supposed to characterise his countrymen. He saw two or three years' service in South Africa, has been twice round the world, and, though he inherits a seat in the House of Lords, is always too busy to occupy it. The earldom was created in 1465, and has remained in the Gresham family in direct line ever since."

"There you have him," said Forbes. "Now, if you and mother had read that——"

"But we did," said Dot, "but we never connected it with Captain Gresham."

"Then you're not as clever as your daddy thinks you are."

"All the more reason, sir," his daughter admonished him, "for your telling us."

"Honeybunch," said her father, "I didn't tell you because I was afraid that, maybe, if you knew, you'd have behaved different. You can't behave better than you always do, and I don't want to see you any different; just your ordinary everyday ways are good enough for anybody. Of course mother's all right—mother's a Palmer—but I thought maybe it would fuss you so I just didn't tell you. So you have been playing around for more than a week with what Joshua Vinney calls a haughty British aristocrat. And you've given him something to think of."

"But all the time he was fooling me and you were letting him. Oh, Daddy, I never thought you could do it."

"And another thing," Forbes pleaded in further extenuation: "he didn't want to go round like an animal in a menagerie. And if you and mother knew you had an earl in tow there's no knowing what kind of an exhibition you'd make of him. All he wanted was to stay here quietly for a spell. He'll take up his title again when he goes back to his friends. 'Ships that pass in the night,' my darling. Don't you worry your pretty head about him. He won't be around here very much longer."

CHAPTER XVI

IN a day or two Dorothy recovered from her surprise—an hour or two had been enough to cure her resentment—and was on terms of almost the old bantering intimacy with the personage to whom she referred as "our noble and distinguished guest" in successful effort to aggravate him.

"I wish," he often assured her, "that I had never confided my guilty secret to you. 'You used to be so kind.'"

"To my friend, Captain Gresham, I was kind. I admired him," she bubbled, "awfully, and I think now, sadly and too late, that he reciprocated. I shall remain true to him. No empty title shall swerve me, me lord. ''Twas the *man* I lovest, not the prince,' though he once misjudged me about it."

She gave Pat no time to reply to this rhapsody. They were jogging out to the tobacco fields prosaically enough in Forbes's buggy and as they jogged she talked. She had rather shunned silences since her discovery of Pat's identity. She clamoured no more for Glendaire stories. Now she swept on.

"If I were a lord," said Dot, "the thing that I should most enjoy would be the feeling that everything was planned for me. You know just what your life is going to be. You know just what your responsibilities are going to be and you can get ready for them. You know just where you're going to live; you know just how much money you're going to have——"

"It's not quite all arranged, don't you know," Pat remonstrated—"a chap can travel a bit even if he be a lord, and as for knowing where one's going to live, why, nearly all the old houses at home and in England are let to you Americans."

"Well, but," she persisted, "you know who you are. You're the Earl of Glamoran, and you'll keep right on being the Earl of Glamoran till the end of things. I'm Dorothy Forbes, now; but I don't know what I may be before I die."

"Dorothy Petty," he suggested hopefully. "The ardent Abraham might forgive your refusal if you whistled him back prettily."

Dot did not answer for some time. She devoted her attention to the horse for a space, but when she spoke again it was still upon the same subject.

"That," she said thoughtfully, "would be even more monotonous than being a lord. I should simply go on living here at Edgecombe all my life,

and, although I'd hate to think of going away from the old place and from dad and mother and The House, yet I think I'd hate worse to *know* that I was never going. I often wonder what God means to do with me."

In all their many conversations she had never given a hint of religious feeling or conviction of any sort and Pat was amazed by the earnestness and simplicity with which she framed the last remark. Falling in with her mood he answered quite as simply and quite as earnestly:

"He made you, I think, to be beautiful and good and to rout all those unpleasant theories about plainness and misery being essential to goodness."

"Of course," Dorothy continued, "He made me for something; and sometimes I think that He made me for something special. You see, He's given me so much, such parents, such a home, and I'm very healthy, and most people think I've got rather good brains; I have never done anything with them," she admitted, with a rueful little laugh, "but I'm pretty young yet to do anything but get ready. Sometimes I sit on the porch and look away off over the hills and wonder if He'll lead out into the world, and what He'll find for me to do there. I am all ready, and even if I have

to be unhappy, I won't care. I have been happy every day of my life for nineteen years and I guess I ought to be able to stand a little of the other thing now."

"But why should you think that," urged Pat—"why should you not go on being happy and making other people happy, too? Go out into the world if you want to, but don't be miserable there. It is a very jolly place if you take it in the proper way."

"What *is* the proper way?" she asked.

"Well," he answered judicially after some thought, "I should say that the proper way to take the world is very much as you take your father. You *know* he is bigger and stronger and older than you are, but you're not a bit afraid of him. You expect him to give you everything you want, and just because you do so expect, he does it. It's all rot my advising you like this, but that's the trick as I've worked it out. And be sure you enjoy everything as it comes along. Nothing pleases the world better than that does."

"That *is* like dad," Dot agreed. "He just loves to give me things and to see that I'm happy with them."

"And so will the world," said Pat; "you wait and see."

"But I've had so much already," Dot protested. "All those things I told you about. And then there is dad's money—I suppose I had better count that, too. Do you know he's very rich?"

"Is he?" questioned Pat.

"Awfully rich," she answered. "But it isn't the kind of tainted money you read about. He never hurt any one, dad didn't. I suppose you think I wouldn't know if he did, but I guess I would. I'm around with him all the time, and I never yet saw a man that seemed to have anything against father. They never scowl at him nor look mean when he's around. He just makes money running the mills and growing tobacco. And although the mill hands all belong to unions, we've never had a strike, except a sympathetic one, when the men all over the East went out together. Our men thought dad would be hard on them for that, but he knew they couldn't help it and he believes in unions, so it was all right after all."

"He's a very wonderful man," said Pat sincerely. "He's always surprising me, as, in fact, you all are. I have read an awful lot about America and some of the things were true about New York and Newport and places like that; one might just as well be at home across the water as in some of the houses in New York; but I never

was prepared for anything like you and your people."

"Well, that's funny," said she. "I'm sure we're ordinary enough. Why, there are lots and lots of towns just like this, with people in them just like us. I guess that's the reason we don't get into books; we're too common," and she crinkled her dainty little nose. "But say," she went on, "I don't believe books can be much good, anyway, because mother and I have read hundreds of novels about the British aristocracy, and we never read about anybody one bit like you."

"For the same reason," answered Pat—"we're too common."

"You don't fool me again," she laughed. "I know better now than I did that night in the pergola, and I know you're not one bit common. Even the newspaper said that you were an unusual Irishman—more energetic, more ambitious than the rest."

"More restless," he corrected. "I love every stone and tree in Glendaire. I love the old servants and the old horses. The old horse that I learned to ride on is as well as ever he was. I love the house and I can endure the neighbours, but after I have been there for a month or two, I get restless and want to be away, out in the world

again. It was restlessness that brought me here—restlessness, not altruism, that makes me want to try the tobacco. Of course, I hope that it will benefit the poor old codgers who look to us for everything, but even if it fails, I sha'n't mind so much—I'll try something else."

"I don't call that restlessness," said Dot—"that's what we call ambition."

"Well, then," said Pat, "I wonder what you'd say of my brother John. He's my twin—five minutes younger than I am, and yet he's so different from me that I love him, actually love him, as if he were not a relation."

"That's a funny thing to say," she laughed.

"It's a true thing," he assured her, "though it isn't very often said perhaps. Well, as I was saying, there's John, five minutes younger than I am, and so like me in size and shape and face and colour that you couldn't tell us apart."

"I think I could," she interrupted. "But never mind that; go on."

"Well, John would rather do anything on earth than leave Glendaire. When he was at Eton, and later at Oxford, he bolted for the place at every vacation; wouldn't go on visits to the other boys' houses; wouldn't hear of the continent; wouldn't stay in town with the mater—who by that time was

married again and settled in London. All John wanted was to get back to Glendaire and there, with only the servants, he is as happy as a king. At least," he corrected, "as happy as the poor old chap ever is—he's so delicate."

"That's too bad," said Dot in sympathy.

"Yes," he agreed, "the poor chap doesn't seem to have been very lucky. There's something wrong with his constitution. But, of course, he's all right sometimes and is as well as any of us; and as I was telling you, his one idea is Glendaire. He's been taking care of it now for twelve or thirteen years, and my word! but he's made a success of it. It's ten times the place it used to be, and I couldn't have gone wandering about the world as I have done, if he hadn't been there to assume my responsibility. The tenants look upon me—their rightful lord—as a sort of ornamental outsider, but it's to John they turn in all practical matters. They even call him 'the master,' while I'm only 'my lord.' He understands them and manages them wonderfully. I can't help feeling that they're right," he ended somewhat ruefully, "John should have been Lord of the Manor and I the younger brother—the wanderer on the face of the earth."

"That would be rather nice," Dot agreed. "I'd get back my Captain Gresham then."

"Do you miss him much?"

"Sometimes, he used to tell such lovely stories."

"Before I leave Edgecombe," vowed Lord Gresham, "I shall have altogether supplanted him in your young affections."

"You'll never do that," said Dot. "I loved him with all the first young enthusiasm of my fresh young heart."

"You're forgetting Abraham."

"And if I were," she retorted, "why should you unkindly remind me of him? My dear Captain Gresham, 'my captain, oh, my captain' never did that. He used to try to make me forget Abraham."

"Very well," said Pat. "It's my turn now. I'll take your mind off Gresham."

"You talk," said Dot, with a laugh, "as though my mind were a sort of sticking plaster. Perhaps it's not such a bad simile. I'm very constant in my attachments."

"And I'm persistent."

"And mother's hospitable. You'll have plenty of time. All the time there is. Whew, but the sun's hot."

CHAPTER XVII

THE sun which shone so hotly down on Dorothy Forbes and Lord Gresham shone as brightly but more kindly upon the Honourable John Gresham as he stood on the steps of Glendaire Castle, drawing on his gloves and watching the endearments passing between his nervous chestnut mare and the elderly groom who stood at her head.

"Great old place," said John as he put his toe into the stirrup and swung himself into the saddle. "Is Pluto chained, Darby?"

"He is, your Honour," the man answered.

"I'm leaving him at home this morning because I intend to ride round the coverts and take a look at the young pheasants."

"Well, he's chained, your Honour, out behind the coach house. He's as safe as a church."

If Darby's idea of ecclesiastical stability were represented by the security of Pluto, his religion must have been in parlous case, for John having trotted down the avenue to a point where a turf road branched off from it, was conscious of an irregular banging clatter behind him. Turning in

his saddle he discovered Pluto, most docile of blood-hounds, in hot chase with his chain, its staple, and a section of ancient oak depending from his collar. There was an expression so blended of triumph and appeal in his faithful eyes and dripping tongue that John was constrained to dismount to relieve him of his impediments (though they had not impeded him in the least) and to abandon his design upon the pheasant runs.

Even the energetic Dorothy Forbes seeing Glendaire in the glory of its May time would have understood that a man could find satisfaction there for all his ambition and activities. Hawthorn—pink and white—drooping yellow laburnum, rhododendrons, horse-chestnuts in spiky bloom filled the air with perfume and the land with colour. John Gresham, as he rode, stuck his cap in his pocket and let the flowering branches brush his hair. And Pluto at his humbler altitude pattered through buttercups, daisies, blue-bells and violets, cowslips and primroses.

"I never saw," thought the Honourable John, as he rode upon his way, "so wonderful a spring as this."

Irish springs, in his era, must have been progressively beautiful, for each of them had earned this encomium.

His customary air of heavy and aloof despondency was affected somewhat by the beauty all about him. He looked almost happy as he followed the grass roads and reached at last the steep pastures on the uplands. There he stopped to speak to a boy in charge of the flocks. His questions were so simple and direct that they drew direct and simple answers even from the tortuous mind of this peasant lad. It was true enough as the wandering Pat had told Dorothy that John knew how to get on with these people. Three minutes sufficed to draw from Rory all the information he possessed or John desired. And several times during his ride he held other such conversations. With the head gamekeeper at whose house he stopped he held longer conference. Everywhere he was dictatorial, masterful, and nowhere was there an insinuation—by so much as the flicker of an eyelid—that he was not master.

Presently he finished his inspection. He looked up at the sun, guessed it to be eleven, corroborated his guess, for he was a man who trusted nature more than watchmakers and liked to put his questions straight to headquarters. It must not be inferred that he always refused help and advice from other minds. On the contrary the library of Glendaire Castle, antiquated, priceless and neg-

lected in all other departments, contained the very newest books on natural science. There also might be found much modern and ancient lore of sun-dials, hedges of box and yew, roses, landscape gardening, shrubs and evergreens, and all that pertains to beauty out of doors.

Glendaire bore eloquent and silent witness to the success with which John studied and applied these gentle arts. Even the man himself, doomed from birth to illness and disappointment, showed the softening influence of these pursuits. From time to time, he halted in his ride to observe how intelligently Nature had accepted his hints and such assistance as he had given her; how profusely she had fulfilled his expectations; how generously she had exceeded his hopes. The pictures he had conjured up in the long winter evenings, the growth and maturity he had waited for during many unflowering years, the vistas he had cut through obscuring thickets, the surprises he had devised in unexpected spots, all were as his mind's eye had seen them, as his mind's despondent habit had told him they would never be.

Pat had described his twin brother as "cracked about Glendaire," and he had not overstated the case. To Pat the place meant pride and pleasure now and rest in the placid years to come. Its

beauty stirred him. Its associations—save those connected with his own parents—sometimes bored and sometimes overwhelmed him. But they never occupied his matter-of-fact attention for very long at a time. He sincerely loved and pitied his delicate brother; made him a handsome allowance; paid him a generous salary to act as his agent and left the management of Glendaire absolutely in John's hands, as, during his later years, the earl, his father, had done. This had been John's one stipulation. He would brook no dictation, no division of authority and responsibility. While Pat was satisfied with his brother's stewardship John would administer the estate. When Pat ceased to be satisfied John would resign. He would accept no modification of his dictatorship.

And Pat had never tried to interfere in his own smoothly running affairs. He never even asked to see the wheels go round. His cheerful optimistic nature suffered partial eclipse in his brother's moody presence and he accepted with meekness, though with some amusement, the position of casual guest into which John always forced him. Pat had often writhed in spirit over his five minutes of seniority and he gladly ignored them when John set him the example. When his African campaigns were over and he had brought back a

brother officer to recuperate at Glendaire, the stranger had found it difficult indeed to believe that this grave gentleman—so like his friend in face and body; so unlike in mind and bearing—was not indeed the host. He was not a subtle man. Indeed, he belonged to a profession in which subtlety and "too much thinking on the event" might mean disaster and defeat—but he saw a fact to which every one had been blind.

"That Johnny," he elegantly phrased his discovery, "really believes that the whole little shooting match belongs to him. It's not actin' with him, you know."

And long after this Columbus had gone back to his regiment "that Johnny" went on believing and every one went on being blind. A little eccentricity of manner might be overlooked in a man carrying the curse and the fear that went always close beside John Gresham. For there was yet another collection of modern books at Glendaire, but not in the pleasant library. They were not even in the tower chamber called the oak room, flanking the great door, in which John Gresham and his secretary, young Jarvis Burke, transacted the business of the estate. They were securely locked away in a chest which stood at the foot of John's bed and they all dealt with one branch

of learning—the psycopathic. In vain the local physician, and such brighter professional lights as the more violent outbreaks of Gresham's disorder brought to Glendaire, remonstrated with him. The books were written by professional men—for professional men. Distinctly, with a cold detachment, they set out symptoms, diagnosis and prognosis of epilepsy and its allied horrors of insanity and disease. John Gresham had for years known quite clearly that neither life nor death promised much for him. There was no trace of the disease in his ancestry; and he knew that though this fact left his ultimate recovery possible, it also left other unspeakable outcomes equally possible. He knew the nature and the danger of the blasts of wrath which swept over him, his habitual mood of almost suicidal gloom. He knew, too, what he owed to the quiet, the calm beauty and the regular outdoor life which Pat and Glendaire gave him. In all his morbid reading regularity of life and an open-air existence were insisted upon. Well, he had them, and they meant his chance; his chance for life and sanity and happiness.

For happiness was not so far from the Honourable John as his customary gravity would suggest. It was within a half-hour's ride from one of his battlemented gates and on the morning that Pluto

put the young pheasants out of the question and into the future John turned his horse's head toward Renira Banbridge. His own heart always turned toward her in pleasure as in sorrow and to-day it was the hope of pleasure which drew him to her; the hope of inducing her to return to Glendaire with him for lunch and an hour among the rhododendrons afterward. And so eager was he in this desire that he neither faltered nor drew rein at the necessity of inviting one of Renira's sisters to the former and more substantial feast.

CHAPTER XVIII

SIR RICHARD BANBRIDGE, Bart., J. P., etc., was sunning himself in a bevy of pointers and setters upon the steps of "The Monastery." He wore an old hunting coat and a general air of the sportsman in the off season and he smoked a short pipe and read a pink paper with most pictorial effect. Had Sir Richard wished to bask in the light of gentler society he might easily have done so, for the Monastery, untrue to all its traditions and vows, furnished sanctuary to no less than four examples of feminine charm. Lady Banbridge and her youngest daughter, the Renira of John Gresham's dreams, represented beauty mature and in the bud. Joan and Betty represented mind triumphant and militant. Renira's ambition was to satisfy John Gresham's love. Joan lived in the hope of some day devoting herself actively to the propaganda for women's suffrage. Betty had already devoted herself to the study of Gaelic and spent her days in vivid and hairy tweeds, uncomfortable, but of native manufacture. In the evening she blossomed out in native lace and poplin as

beautiful as her morning things were hideous. Now it happened, strangely enough, that these two intellectual sisters were remarkably stupid-looking. Their long heavy faces suggested the portraits left to us of George Eliot; like her they bore a far-away but unmistakable resemblance to a tired horse. This equine cast of feature might have been expected to endear them to their father but did not. He was frankly bored and puzzled by them.

But Renira who was, as her sisters lost no opportunity of pointing out to her, more illogical, flippant and ignorant than they could have believed possible in a human adult, had a face which sparkled with intelligence. Her blue eyes saw everything within their range, her quick tongue found words and comment—of a sort which froze her sisters' erudition in their throats—for all that her eyes fell upon. Joan and Betty, stiff and silent, were accustomed to accept congratulations upon their possession of so clever and entertaining a sister—accustomed but not resigned. They knew that once started upon their own beloved topics they could out-talk Renira who had not a single conviction to sustain her conversation. It is possible that the guests knew this also. It is certain that they abstained from assisting the

sisters to mount their hobbies and always dragged them off when they managed to get a leg over on their own account. Sir Richard, their sire, and as much a stranger to them as any wandering guest could be, also preferred the more responsive Renira to her inconvenient sisters. He considered Betty to be only a little less than a lunatic and a good deal less than a lady, since she had tried to convert him to wear a kilt and let his hair grow long.

"Bless my soul, woman," he remonstrated. "Do you want to take my breeches from me? A pretty figure I'd cut in the hunting field without 'em."

It was characteristic of Sir Richard that he saw himself always in the hunting field and costume. As a matter of fact, he was rarely seen out of them.

"A M.F.H. in petticoats!" he chuckled, "the dogs themselves would be laughing at me, to say nothing of the horses."

"But your ancestors, the original Celts, wore kilts," Betty urged with a blush. She might or might not have convictions, but she certainly had very proper feelings, and this conversation was playing havoc with them. Only her strong devotion to the cause could have induced her to embark upon the subject of kilts with a gentleman,

even with an elderly gentleman. To hear the matter treated with flippancy was almost too much to bear. Yet what save flippancy could have prompted his next remark.

"Because they hadn't anything else to wear, my love. And even if I should give you my breeches —which I have no intention of doing—how do I know the matter would end there? In a month or two you'd burrow back to some more remote forefather and try to make me swap my kilts for a string of cockle-shells. Reform yourself, my dear, as much as you will. *Any* change would be for the better. But, by Heaven, you must leave me my breeches!"

And Betty, blushing an unbecoming brick colour, removed herself and her suggestion. It must be admitted that in the privacy of the old school-room, now the study, she wept. It must also be admitted that her father guessed that she would and found the idea highly diverting. From which it will appear that Sir Richard's sense of humour was of a robust kind. It was a little like the tigers he had travelled to Africa to kill and whose skins on the drawing-room floor proved so many snares to the unwarned and unexpecting. Its smile was so wide as to be nearly a snarl. It may be remarked that Sir Richard's wife was devoted to the tiger

skins. They represented the intervals of peace which had made her married life bearable. Renira, the youngest daughter of this happy union, scorned the tigers. "Twelve of you," she would reproach them, "and only one of him! You *might* have seized upon your opportunity—and upon him. I'm ashamed of you!" Sir Richard was one of those men of whom absence made his womenkind fonder. His final exit would have roused their absolute devotion. But he was very popular in the country and he had been known to stay up all night with a sick cow. He was in the habit of referring to that cow. The story of his nervous collapse when she was definitely out of danger had edified many a dinner-table. The climax ran:

"An' there was I, blubberin' like a fool, I give you my word. An' there was she, breathin' sweet and steady with her head on an armful of hay. I never was so moved in my life."

It was often said that Sir Richard's wife did not appreciate him. Her reception of this touching narrative gave colour to the rumour. But it was not generally understood that by some trick of the mind the story of the cow's head on the armful of straw always suggested to her the picture of a child's golden head on a pillow, her own head laid down beside it and her husband's voice—in a tone

utterly unlike that which he employed for the cow story—saying to her:

"It's all over, I tell you. That child is dead. Stop your blubbering. Aren't three girls enough for any man to feed and clothe? Now, if it had been a boy!"

And after a long space, a mercifully long space, the voice again:

"What did you call this one? There is to be an entry or something on the parish books and I can't remember the silly name you gave it. Stop that noise, I say."

It was as true, as it was frequently remarked, that Mrs. Banbridge's opinion of her husband varied from that of those neighbours who knew him slightly. She too never forgave the desultory tigers.

CHAPTER XIX

RENIRA and John easily persuaded Betty to act as their chaperon. Indeed, Betty required no persuasion. She seized upon any opportunity of visiting Glendaire for she had undertaken to convert John's secretary, young Jarvis Burke, to the Gaelic revival and propaganda. Suitable candidates for conversion were rare in that immediate neighbourhood, and young Jarvis promised well, though as yet she had made no attempts upon his costume. Also there were certain old manuscript volumes in the Glendaire library relating to the days in which her imagination loved most to linger. In the library, therefore, she and young Burke whiled away the sunny afternoon hours, while John and Renira went about the grounds.

Renira in her riding habit looked very sweet and boyish, and John's heart stirred a little out of its accustomed beat as he imagined what life would be with Renira always there, and with no superintelligent Betty to be propitiated and soothed with minds to conquer. John decided to let that enthusiast try the housekeeper next and then the other

servants. But the end would come some time. After the scullery maids: what? John wondered.

Renira wandered from place to place, recognising old friends among the flower beds and being introduced to new ones; marvelling upon the growth of the clambering rose which spanned the arch between the formal Italian garden and the wild border land beyond, where the close-clipped hawthorn hedges became trees of wonderful bloom and where the flowers requiring little cultivation stood sturdily and laughed at those recently transplanted from the hothouses. Renira was sitting on the edge of the fountain feeding the goldfish and wishing that the Monastery boasted some such attraction.

"But father wouldn't hear of our having them," she complained. "He thinks everything but horses an extravagance."

"I shouldn't interfere with him on that subject if I were you," said John—"not, at least, as long as he'd let me ride his horses."

"Oh, we get plenty of riding," she admitted. "In the hunting season, you know, we get nearly too much; but I do wish he'd give us something to spend on the place and the house. He's done absolutely nothing to it since his father died and we came in for it. And that was before you began at

this. Yet see how beautiful, how wonderful you have made these gardens and the house! Even I can remember it as being so different."

"I have been getting it ready for you," said John, taking his place beside her. "And I think it is nearly ready now."

Suddenly all her gaiety died and her eyes filled with tears. This air of false proprietorship always made her miserable.

"Don't, dear, don't," she pleaded. "You know we agreed never to speak of it."

"Never while it was hopeless," he corrected. "But I'm beginning to see light ahead. Listen, darling, I've been perfectly well for nearly three years, and you know the doctors said that after three years it would be safe——"

"Yes, yes, I know," she interrupted, with a vivid blush, "but I'm wiser now than when you spoke of this before, and I'm afraid, dear, that it won't do yet. What you said a moment ago about getting this place ready for me is very sweet and very lover-like and very kind——"

"And literally true," her lover assured her. "I hardly ever think of it except in relation to you—to the time when you'll always be here with me."

"Yes, dear, yes. I know you look forward always to having us together, but think, John,

think hard and answer truly; do you ever look forward to having me without the place?"

"Never!" he answered after a pause. "Never! I can't imagine any other life for us but this—I won't live any other life, and if Pat thinks that his five minutes' advantage of me gives him the right to interfere with my life, he is very much mistaken. Look here, Renira, you know I am fond of you, but I give you my word I'd shoot him like a dog if he ever tries to lord it over me and the place here."

"Dear John," said Renira, "don't talk so wildly, you know you wouldn't injure Pat for all the gold in Golconda."

"I'm not talking about gold. It's this place that I have made and loved and lived for. What did he ever do that it should be his? I swear to you, I'll never let him take it from me."

"I can't bear to hear you talk this way," cried poor Renira. "You know it's not true."

"It's quite true, I intend to let you see what sort of man I really am. When our marriage——"

Renira stretched a little hand toward him and he held it in both of his as he went on. "When our marriage, sweetheart, seemed as far away as the clouds, it would have been a crime to tell you anything which might have destroyed your love for

your worthless lover. The better you thought me then, the happier for you. But now that Pat seems likely to go on travelling about as he has all these years back, and to leave me in possession here; now that the enemy seems to be scotched at least (for three years is a long time, my darling), *now* I want you to think seriously all over again about marrying me, and you can't do that unless I tell you what sort of a beast I am. You know that you and the place are the only things in the world I care for, because I have never forgiven my mother for the five minutes which made an earl of Pat and a hireling of me."

"Oh, my dear," she remonstrated. "My dear, my dear!"

"Yes, I know, I know it's shocking, unfilial and all that sort of thing, but I'm telling you to-day the absolute truth about myself, and that's a part of it. I hate my mother."

"I know," she said, "I've always known, but it's terrible to hear you say it."

"And when Pat was in South Africa and the lists of killed and wounded began to pour in I used to feel that I would give anything on earth to read his name among the dead."

Renira started up somewhat wildly. "No, no, John," she cried, "you cannot mean what you are

saying. For God's sake, John, don't say that you wanted Pat out of the way, you know he loves you and that he would never think of interfering here."

"It was all on your account," said John, looking sombrely up at her.

"Oh, don't, John, hold me responsible," she wailed—"don't say it was all for me. You love the place more, John—you know you do."

"Love it," he echoed. "Ay, more than any of you will ever know. You know that, Renira—you always have known it—and now you know the rest—that if you marry me you will have a husband consumed with covetousness, rusted with envy, perverted and bitter by an accident of five minutes."

"I will be married to the man I love," Renira answered—"and that's all I ask of life."

CHAPTER XX

PRESENTLY they went back to the castle where John had made some alterations and improvements which he was anxious to submit to her judgment. Betty met them on the broad steps.

"The post has come," she cried, "the American post—and there's a thick letter from Pat for you, John. I know his writing. It's on the hall table; do come in and read it. I am dying to hear the news."

Together they moved into the hall and John, after a perfunctory apology, tore the letter open and began to read. Renira and Betty interested themselves in some papers which the same post had brought. Upon Renira's part the interest was quite assumed, for her mind was still full of her recent talk with John, full of gladness and foreboding, pride and fear. Suddenly, a hideous noise and a heavy fall broke the pleasant silence. Jarvis, white-faced but determined, rushed out of the oak room and sprang to where John, having fallen from his chair, was writhing and fighting on the floor. Betty, with one horrified glance,

dashed toward the stairs, fell over the front of her riding habit and lay there whining and sobbing. Renira's impulse was to go to John's assistance, but Jarvis waved her away.

"Go to your sister," he commanded. "Or, no, go to the housekeeper and tell her to send Mr. Gresham's man here at once. Go, I tell you," he reiterated, standing always between her and the awful thing on the floor.

The terrified Renira obeyed, and when Mrs. O'Leary had given the necessary orders, she tried to comfort the broken-hearted girl. Betty, hysterical and bleeding from a slight cut on the cheek, was soon brought to them, and these three women waited together until the doctor came and went and the ordinary routine of the house was re-established. Betty, the least concerned in the catastrophe, was the most vehement in her emotion. The other two were very quiet and spoke in whispers together.

"We thought, you know," said Mrs. O'Leary, "we thought that he was quite recovered, poor dear gentleman. He hasn't had an attack now for three years."

"I know," answered Renira.

"And he was beginning to feel so encouraged. He had never been free for so long before. Oh!

Miss Banbridge, dear, it's a cruel disease! an awful disease! reaching out of the dark, so to speak, and touching you on the shoulder when you least expect it. Poor, dear gentleman. He has a bitter life, and if it has made him a little hard, who can blame him? Not I, for one."

"Nor I," murmured Renira, "he's never hard to me."

"No, Miss Banbridge, dear, nor ever would be. But he's sometimes hard with the men and with the tenants. He's not as popular here as his lordship is, although his lordship never gives us a thought and Mr. Gresham lives for the prosperity of the place. A lonely man, Miss Banbridge, lonely, hard and bitter, and if there's any way he can be saved, it ought to be done. You're the one to do it."

"Yes, I know," Renira answered.

Only a short hour before life with John at Glendaire had seemed full of happiness and security, ambition's greatest lure, earth's brightest promise. But in that intervening hour she had seen it as an awful prison house, a hideous anxiety. She dreaded and yet craved it.

"I'll say no more, miss," said Mrs. O'Leary. "But I've long wanted to say that much. Those that are interested in Mr. Gresham ought to give

thought of the way he's living here alone, too proud to admit he's lonely, and they should do what they can to put an end to it."

The housekeeper went about her duties and Renira sat in the embrasure of the window and looked out over the place to which her lover had given so much of his thought and life. Beautiful and smiling it lay in the afternoon sunlight, sweet and peaceful and cheery the gardens looked; a noble avenue of beeches led away to the west, the mountains rose protectingly to the south-east, grim but kindly. There were plantations of young trees upon these mountains, sheep grazed upon them, grouse and pheasants were sheltered there, and one patch of natural woodland showed where the deer park lay. It was all John's doing; the result of his intelligence. Yet, somewhere within the house he lay, the intelligence gone out of him; the youth and the manhood dead in him and all his strength perverted, distorted! She had heard of these attacks, had imagined them vaguely as periods of pain and exhaustion, but she had never guessed anything like the reality. The revelation which John had begun at the fountain had been more unreserved than he had intended, and Renira, who had looked undismayed upon his moral lapses, had shrunk with horror from the physical.

Wildly that day but more calmly during the weeks that followed, she realised that marriage with John Gresham was impossible. She reached this conclusion through many a night of tears and many a long conversation with her wise and gentle mother.

Soon passed an hour or two, and presently Jarvis was with them again.

"Yes, Mr. Gresham was better," he reported, "a little weak, perhaps, but quite himself." He wished Miss Banbridge to read his lordship's letter. It would explain things to her. And might he trouble her to make the news public? He, Jarvis, had been told—he would inform the household; but for the outsiders Mr. Gresham begged that Miss Banbridge would act as herald. Mr. Gresham would not be able to see any one for some days. That was Jarvis's message. And now might he suggest that Miss Banbridge would be the better for a little fresh air. Perhaps she would like to take the letter—she would see that it was rather long—out into the garden. He would arrange that she should be undisturbed there.

So it was on the edge of the fountain where she and John had talked earlier in the day that Renira crouched and read:

"My dear John:

"You must have been wondering what has become of me. It is nearly six weeks since I last wrote you. A long time, I suppose, it seems, to you, but a short enough time in which to fall in love and get married. That's what I've been doing. There's no good in telling you what a darling of a sister I've got for you. You wouldn't believe it, you old misogynist. You know how I vowed after she, who shall be nameless, threw me over, that I'd never have anything to do with a girl again. Well, dear boy, that was all nonsense. She wasn't a girl at all. She was a wax figure. My wife is a real living girl moved by her own true heart and the keenest set of brains, my boy, that you'd meet in a long day's drive. To look at she's a darling, to talk to she's a wonder, to travel with, she'll be beyond description.

"For we're going to travel. It is the one thing upon which her father, a charming man, by the way, insisted; he didn't seem to care about settlements, said he had enough money to see the thing through if anything happened to mine, but he did make it a point that I should take Dot—by the way, her name was Dorothy Forbes—to see the world. She has not long finished school, and he and his wife had intended taking her round

the world. She's never left the little Connecticut town in which she was born. But when Dot and I came to an understanding, I persuaded Mr. Forbes to let me act as cicerone, told him I'd been about a good bit and knew the ropes, and on that condition he gave his consent to our marriage. We are to travel for two or three years before we settle down. His heart was set upon it. Dot's heart was set on it. She has been reading up histories and travels ever since she left school in preparation for it, and you can guess how readily I fell in with the plan. We will let the tobacco go until I return. The plan is a good one. Elliott was right, and Dot is looking forward to establishing the industry at Glendaire. I forgot to mention that her father is, among other things, a planter, and that she is an expert on the subject. What larks we three shall have together! and Renira, too. She and Dot would get on like winking. Give her my love, and, believe me,

"Your affectionate brother, PAT.

"*P. S.*—Do you mind writing this news to the mater. I tell myself I haven't time, but to be frank, I think I rather funk it."

Across the bottom of the page John had written with a pencil: "Sic transit gloria mundi."

CHAPTER XXI

TWICE again the rhododendrons blossomed and faded; twice again spring followed winter before the return of the Earl and Countess of Glamoran, accompanied by a top-heavy young gentleman familiarly addressed as Pitty Pat but entered on the baptismal records of Edgecombe, Connecticut, as "Patrick Michael Forbes Gresham, son of Patrick Gresham, Earl of Glamoran, Glendaire Castle, Ballycree, Ireland, and of Dorothy Forbes Gresham, of Edgecombe, Connecticut." In Burke's "Peerage" he was set down as Viscount Glendaire.

Even the most ponderous of the British papers devoted some space and some enthusiasm to the heralding of his arrival. The more frivolous periodicals furnished further details; the American press and magazines gushed forth a wealth of misinformation. In all of them there were references to his father's prowess and popularity and the wealth and beauty of his mother; in some of them there were descriptions and portraits of his parents and his rattle, and in one there was a series of views of the Glendaire estate.

Mrs. Forbes moved through this cloud of golden literature as one in a dream. She had vaguely looked forward to a title for her grandson just as she had known that he might some day wear long trousers and drive a motor. But it had not occurred to her that he should arrive upon the scene already titled Viscount Glendaire. That gave a sort of heavenly *cachet* to his state.

"I don't know as we *ought* to let him cry like that," she would remonstrate with some adamantine nurse; "you know he's British aristocracy," and his small lordship soon learned to connect pleasant breaches of discipline with the near presence of his grandmother.

Of a friendly disposition was Viscount Glendaire, when he was introduced to his inheritance, very wide of smile and proud of the occasional tooth which this smile exhibited. He was about three feet high, two feet in circumference and two years old. His disposition, according to his grandmother, was angelic. His nose, according to his grandfather, was "Palmer, as sure as you're born." He was soft, yet solid to the touch, weighed an astonishing amount, and his only eccentricity was an aversion to nurses. In vain were candidates of all ages and nationalities submitted to him. Once in his eighteenth month—the party had

then established itself in Florence—his American nurse had been called home by some domestic joy or sorrow of her own, and James, his father's valet, had volunteered, temporarily, for her deserted post. Ever since then the heir to all the Greshams had howled at the touch of a female hand at dressing time. During the rest of the day he endured feminine society, nay, he even waxed happy and heavy in it, but he would be taken up and put to bed by no one but his father's valet. James was by long training accustomed to the intricacies of masculine apparel, but in the first days of this service the perspiration would stand thick upon his brow as he held Pitty Pat, very pink and contented after a bath, upon his knee and thus addressed him:

"So those is your clothes, sir. Rather baggy and cool I'd call 'em. *Could* you take your mind off of that truly remarkable toe long enough to say which piece of it all you'd like to put on first? No choice, haven't you? Well, neither have I, so we'll try the one that looks most like a shirt. If you'd be so good, m' lord, as to ask her ladyship, your mother, to put you into trousers, I'd feel more sure of giving satisfaction."

"Paddy Daddy," would be his small lordship's answer. It was two-thirds of his entire vocabulary.

"Yes, sir. I'll consult his lordship when I've got you looking right. 'Ow would you like your 'air, sir, military? Parted at the side? Allow me to point out, sir, that your shoes is not meant for food. 'Ere, sir, 'old 'ard, sir, you was nearly off there, my lord."

"Jimmy," remarked Pitty. It was the other third of his vocabulary and it melted James's soul to unresisting putty. All his life he had been known as James. A certain austerity of feature quite belying his tender nature had combined with his profession to fix upon him the more formal version of his name. He had often tried to persuade shy housemaids and eligible ladies' maids to use the derivative. But until he had succeeded in teaching it to Pitty Pat he had still been James to all the world. It is no exaggeration to say that he would have cheerfully died for his little master, though he had no intention of doing so. It seemed more sensible and useful to stay alive and to serve him in such small ways as were possible. Talking Pitty Pat to sleep was, perhaps, the service James most enjoyed. The dressing and undressing never lost their terrors of a baby dropped, a safety-pin swallowed, an arm or a leg twisted altogether off by his well-meaning but clumsy hand. In all other capacities his hands

were clever and deft enough, but the soft warmth of Pitty Pat and the little caresses with which he punctuated the progress of his robing and disrobing unnerved the unaccustomed James. He had not served many gentlemen who were in the habit of throwing short arms about his neck and planting open-mouthed kisses upon his correct features.

Singing Pitty Pat to sleep was one of her ladyship's most cherished privileges. Travelling, even as they did it, in leisurely fashion, had interfered so much with the academic rearing of the little chap that his unregenerate parents after months of compromise between theory and existing and ever-varying circumstances, decided to let theory go by the board and to enjoy the baby as they enjoyed everything else. They were conscientious on the subject of diet and sleep, but in all other ways they ignored the rules and helps set down for such as they. So Dot crooned the baby to sleep. Pat put him daily through a whole course of gymnastics, they kept him with them as much as possible, and, generally speaking, by the book, ruined the child's future and foredoomed him to neurasthenia.

Upon those evenings when duty or pleasure interfered with Dot's carrying out her most deadly designs upon the habits of her offspring, it was

James's privilege to act as her understudy. The nurse was glad enough to resign the nursery to him. The constant society of Patrick Gresham 16th was a rather exhausting honour.

"Jimmy," that scion of nobility would remark, looking out over the edge of the crib to greet his entertainer with his wide smile and preparing to be taken out of his prison and held in the angle of his friend's strong arm.

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir. But you're not to get up, sir," James would answer as he tucked his small master into the blankets and set his rebellious head straight upon the pillow. "Yes, sir, it's Jimmie. I took the liberty of droppin' in to pass the time o' day like. Now you lay still, sir, while I turns down the lights. So. And draws this chair close to your bedside. So. And now I can talk to you confidential and private. There's a plenty to tell you, sir."

"Paddy Daddy," was Pitty Pat's stock reply, accompanied by an attempt to arise and go in search of that astute adviser.

"Well, of course, sir," James was forced to grant: "of course, as you say, his lordship *is* concerned in it. And her ladyship, too, if you go into that. But you're the one that's mostly the cause of these here changes and you're the one

I'd rather talk to about 'em. Your not understanding a word I say to you, sir, is the greatest kindness ever done me by a gentleman."

"Jimmy," was the remark next in Pitty Pat's repertoire. He made it.

"No, sir, of course not as you say. I couldn't talk to you so open if you was apt to get an inkling of my drift. But things bein' as they are, sir, and his lordship speakin' frequent of goin' 'ome, it's but right some one should warn you, sir. There's no one else to p'int out these things *but* me. I knows your uncle. His lordship (though his twin brother as you know, of course, sir) don't know no more about Mr. Gresham than you do. Not so much, sir, for I've opened your eyes on a point or two."

If James had done so they were certainly closing again now under the spell of the lowered voice, the comforting hand upon the little shoulder. Pitty Pat seemed content to leave his protector to cope with the dangers he described.

"You'll read about wicked uncles in the story books when you gets old enough—or maybe I'll tell 'em to you before that—but you'll never read nor hear of a worse one than your own. No, not the Babes in the Wood nor the Princes in the Tower ever had a wickeder.

" 'Ow do I know? you'll ask. Don't I tell you we lived there three months after we got back from Africa the last time, and off and on before we sailed for America. And don't my friends the housekeeper and the head coachman and the gamekeeper—all sendin' their lovin' duties to you, sir, tell me 'ow his bin carryin' on. 'Avin' his fits when his lordship writes an' says he's married to her ladyship. An' you know, sir, I told you 'ow 'e took on when we sent him a cable sayin' you was 'ere and a boy?"

James looked about the pretty room, considered all the sweet accessories which Dot carried with her from place to place and with which she could make a home of the most unpromising hotel accommodation. All that he had ever vaguely felt unable to provide for his lordship's perfect pleasure she had thought of, and lo, it was there. The lights burned low in the big room. Silver and gold gleamed on the dressing tables, familiar photographs in heavy frames stood about, a golden robe lay across a chair. The air was sweet with some faint perfume which James had learned to associate with her ladyship. The child's breathing was the only sound which broke the stillness, and James knew that a man, his master's only brother, was going mad because these things were.

Only that morning he had heard again from his friend the housekeeper at Glendaire Castle. "I pray to God," she had written, "that you'll be coming home soon. Mr. John is worse every day. He works from morning to night; never rests, never spares himself and never spares any of us. The place and the house are more wonderful than ever, but nothing satisfies him for long. It's seldom enough he goes to see Miss Renira Banbridge now—him that used to be so fond of her. They tell me she is fallin' off greatly in her looks and colour, poor girl. But the queerest change in him is his meanness—paring the pennies he expects us all to be and saving everywhere. He's cruel hard on the tenants, too, I'm told, and he leads that misfortunate young Mr. Jarvis Burke the life of a dog.

"Life here at Glendaire since the late earl's time has been sad and quiet enough, with no company to speak of and his young lordship travelling about on the waves of the world. But ever since his young lordship married, things here have gone from bad to worse, with Mr. Gresham, I mean. He's just the way he used to be when his poor mother used to be at her wit's ends what to do with him when he was a boy. You'll present my duty to his lordship and her ladyship, and to his

little lordship. So no more at present, from your attached Margaret O'Leary."

"So, you see, sir," James went on, addressing his now sleeping charge. "You see that there is surprises waiting for you in your old home; and however much that bad uncle of yours may try to seem friendly, I want you never to forget that when he heard you was born he ordered a horse up from the stables and rode over the mountains like a mad creature, and when he came back the horse, a strong young hunter that Mr. McBride, the coachman, was training up for the Dublin show, dropped dead under him on the way up the avenue."

James sat at his post and watched the little sleeping face until his mistress came to relieve him. He was sorely tempted to hand Mrs. O'Leary's letter to her ladyship, but the training of years held. He had not been asked for his opinion and advice and until he was so asked he would be silent. He was somewhat comforted and encouraged in this course by the reflection that his master and mistress were excellently well equipped to take care of themselves.

CHAPTER XXII

DURING the three years which followed her marriage Dot changed but little. She was just as genuine, just as universally interested and interesting as she had always been. And the world, true to her husband's prophecy and aided by her husband's efforts, had indeed been kind to her. They had spent the first year and a half in America, ranging by slow luxurious stages from moose hunting in Canada to crocodile shooting in the Florida bayous; from trout fishing in the rivers and lakes of Maine to hunting grizzlies in the Rockies. They had done a season of opera, art galleries, theatres and concerts in New York, and there Dot had met for the first time the American woman as she is known to literature.

This was a person always and eminently well dressed. She spoke a dialect of slang half English and half American. Her accent, too, was half and half and she prided herself rather noisily upon her complete disregard for all that Mrs. Forbes had taught Dorothy to venerate. Homes, husbands and babies were so many tribulations. They had to be endured but they were rarely

spoken of. Dorothy found this type so amazing that she set about analysing it, and discovered that a vast amount of affectation was used in the composing of it. At heart her fashionable friends were very much like other women, and many a blasé-looking hostess had whispered: "Wouldn't you like to see the nursery? The youngsters are adorable when they are asleep. Don't tell the others. They'd only laugh at me. But when we're at home I generally manage to get in once or twice during the evening."

And once Dorothy and her creeping hostess had come upon Pat and the boastful host in the dim talcum-scented land of innocency.

"They're great," cried the host to the hostess, "out of sight and the image of you." And the hostess so far forgot her dignity as to kiss him.

Pat, experienced traveller as he was, found new pleasure in that pursuit when it was shared by so intelligent a companion and he revisited old haunts and sought out new ones with a fresh energy. Everywhere they were received almost with acclaim—the newspapers had arranged that—and when then the eighteen months were nearly over they returned to Edgecombe to await the arrival of the seventeenth Gresham in the direct line.

The pride and delight with which the Forbeses greeted their grandson were beyond description. The entertainments given in his honour, the tobacco fields planted in his name, the bank accounts opened, the dresses embroidered, the nurses warred with and discharged, the congratulations of the neighbours, the rise in that month's salary for all the Forbes' employees, and the consequent enthusiasm were, like the feelings of Mr. Petty, beyond words. That noble lover, in the new enjoyment of his partnership with Mr. Vinney, showed an unchanged elevation of character. He sent the baby a spoon and he treated Pat with unchanged friendliness.

"I don't know but it's a good thing," he told the jubilant husband and father, "that I didn't marry Dot. I don't mind telling you that I *was* thinking somewhat of marrying her when you first come around, but I wasn't sure she was as *earnest* as the future Mrs. Petty has got to be. So I held back, and then—lucky enough—you come and took her off my hands."

Lord Gresham looked closely at him—the calm of his features was unbroken and serene. It was quite evident that he believed what he was saying. His self-love had performed this miracle to heal the scars of its beloved.

"Perhaps you're right," said Pat. "Perhaps you would be happier with some one else. You have that to consider."

"Of course," Abraham agreed, "a feller has got to consider himself. Can't marry the first girl that wants him. How does she seem to git along? Gittin' over it yet?"

"Just beginning," Pat answered.

"That's good!" cried Abraham, with rare generosity. "This travelling ought to have took her mind off it somewhat, don't you think?"

"Say!" he volunteered, with one of his characteristic transitions—"say! I took up the cornet like I told you I would. Maybe Dot would like to have me come round and play to her some night?"

"Wouldn't that rather upset her?" questioned Pat in timely inspiration. "Make her see the difference, I mean. You know I don't play the cornet."

"Maybe you're right," Abraham answered sadly. "We don't want to make it any worse for her than it's got to be. I guess when she begins to get around, I'll take a trip up to New York. There's a hardware convention takes place there next month, and of course they're counting quite a little on me. I guess I'd better run up to it."

"Do; there's a good chap," said Pat gratefully. "By all means go." And when Abraham abandoned the sorrowing hardware dealers and returned to Edgecombe, the Greshams had already left.

By stages slower than ever, since their party—augmented by their son and his attendants—was an unwieldy one, they travelled about the map of Europe, very slowly, very pleasantly and very leisurely. In Florence they stayed so long that they found it desirable to take a house there and Dorothy enjoyed, or rather underwent, her first housekeeping experience. In this, as in the travelling, James was a tower of strength. He spoke no language but his own, but he met the thieving and designing Italian servants with an instinct for economy as inborn as their own, and his eye for the detection of financial leakage was as keen as it was untiring. Dot learned to speak Italian during the months they spent in Romola's city. Pat knew it already and he and she and the delightful old Anglo-Italian who had joined their train in the capacity of tutor to Dot spent many a delightful hour in the churches and museums upon which Savonarola has forever cast the magic of his name. They travelled on to France and rested in Rheims for a lovely spring in honour,

Dot wrote to her father, of its jackdaw and its cathedral. They made endless sorties into the surrounding country. There Dot learned something of the thriftiest housekeeping in the world. In her earnest ambition to fit herself for her new position as chatelaine of Glendaire Castle and arbiter of the fates of Ballycreel, she took infinite pains to study housing, sanitation, health, diet and occupation. Lord Gresham laughed at her enthusiasm. He was more accustomed to his responsibilities and they sat lightly upon him. "John" he explained, "can put you up to no end of dodges. I always ask him when I want to know anything."

"But while we're here," Dot pleaded, "do let's learn what we can."

Wherever they went she learned something, but even Pat, her constant friend and fellow-student, could not have told when or where she acquired a dainty grace and reserve of manner, a slow precision of speech and a tender low-voiced intonation. Perhaps she never felt the lack of these essentials to her new position, perhaps her acquirement of them was the natural result of meeting the flower of continental society. Perhaps it had, Pat conjectured, something to do with the Palmer blood.

There were, however, some natural changes wrought in her young ladyship. Her dressing had always been exquisite: it was now a little more elaborate, that was all. Her wit and her sympathy had always been instant—they were now more carefully worded, that was all. Her intelligence had always been fine and high; it now ranged over wider, nobler fields, that was all. And when the years of their exile were over, Pat wrote with all sincerity and truth to John:

"I am bringing home the noblest, sweetest woman in the world to be your sister."

CHAPTER XXIII

THEY broke their journey in England so that Dot and Pitty Pat might be introduced to Pat's mother, who frankly avowed that if they wanted to see her they would have to come to London to do it, as she had no intention of crossing the channel. She was not a good sailor and she had the courage of her fears. Yet no one could have seemed less timorous than she was when she motored to Charing Cross to meet her eldest son, her only daughter-in-law and her only grandchild. Indeed, she was cool-headed enough in the midst of alarms to ask Pat the hotel at which he intended to stay, and Pat, who knew his mother and delighted in her whims, named one as far as possible from their then situation and from her flat.

"Nonsense," pronounced the old lady. "You'll go to the Cecil or you'll come to me; and in either case you'll come to me first to have lunch, and you can walk round and see about the rooms afterward."

But by the time lunch was over, there was no question of seeking rooms. Mrs. Fortescue was

delighted with Dot. Mr. Fortescue had always been fond of his stepson and now Pitty Pat was forging chains about him. So Pat went out on no more difficult a project than to look up a few chaps at the club and Dorothy was left alone with Mrs. Fortescue.

Of this formidable new relative Dot only knew that she had begun life upon the stage, that she was one of the very first actresses to migrate into nobility, and that Ireland and country life had so bored her that she, as soon as propriety would allow, permitted Mr. Fortescue to fill the blank left in her existence by the death of the old earl. She had promptly repaired to town to spend a happy and busy life and a large income among dressmakers, gossip, the theatres and a fleet of motors. Hence the flat. She had no time to take care of a house, and Glendaire Castle had left her no desire to have one.

Mrs. Fortescue on the contrary was amply informed as to her daughter-in-law. That dutiful son and brother John Gresham had obeyed Pat's behest. He had "broken the news to mother" in such wise that he had nearly achieved the happy result of breaking mother too. Some "American Vulgarian," he wrote, "had married Pat. He was mad enough to marry her, but not quite mad

enough to bring her home. He writes that it will take three years to civilize her. He always liked the society of savages. He'll get enough of it now."

To this filial effusion Mrs. Fortescue had replied, "You always were an unconscionable liar. Send me Pat's letter and believe me to be, your affectionate mother."

Since this first interchange of confidences John had sent his mother further extracts from Pat's correspondence dealing with the steps being taken to polish "The Vulgarian." "She'll never be fit to bring home," he happily prophesied and, believing his prophecy, found peace.

These things were in Mrs. Fortescue's keen old mind when she prepared to welcome her "daughter." From the first Dot's travelling accessories earned the approbation of her fastidious taste, and her sharp old eyes caught every sign of the affection and comradeship tinctured with scrupulous etiquette which characterised her son's manner to his wife.

"That's right, my dear," she encouraged Dot as soon as she found herself alone with that young matron. "Keep him in order—they all want it, and I can see you've trained him well."

Dot of course protested against this, but——

"Tut, tut," Mrs. Fortescue cried; "don't tell me. Wasn't I married to his father, and don't I know what those Greshams can be like unless they are held well in hand. I made the mistake of being the patient Griselda with the earl, but I knew better with Mr. Fortescue. Look at *him* for a husband!" This last invitation was of course figurative, Mr. Fortescue having been despatched in search of cucumbers of especial desirability for sandwiches at tea-time. Dot agreed that he was indeed a model. Mrs. Fortescue accepted this as a tribute to her powers as a disciplinarian and went on: "It's all a question of time. Begin at the right time and you're all right. Put it off and you never can do it. Never let them feel that you care one jot what they like or want or wish, give them what is good for them, feed them well, insist upon every possible attention from them, never go out without them, yet never stay at home because they don't want to go out. This is the advice that I always give to brides; it carries weight because I can point to my husband and say, as I do to you: 'Look at Mr. Fortescue.'"

"I will," Dot promised, and later, when she did, he several times, at important points of his wife's discourse, rewarded her scrutiny with a long and patient wink. But this was later. Now, how-

ever, in the quiet of the early afternoon, Mrs. Fortescue turned from the glories of the future to the trials of the past. "The Greshams," she assured her visitor, "were a bad lot—always had been." They had broken the hearts of all the women who cared for them, and if Dorothy wanted confirmation of this she could just study the picture gallery at Glendaire. "My dear, they'll make you weep," said she. "Pick out one that looks happy and you'll find she was painted before she was married. There's a young beauty there, Lady Margaret Ecclestone she used to be. Reynolds painted her three months after her wedding, and her face is the saddest thing that I ever saw.

"Now, Pat," she went on to explain, "is not a Gresham, he's a Moriarty through and through. Just like my people. The Greshams always stay down in that pokey place of theirs and let the melancholy and misery soak into them. You'll see a true Gresham when you see my son John —the most insufferable man, my dear, that I've ever met. Pat is fond of him. Pat's a fool, but you're no fool, my dear, and so I am telling you to keep an eye on your promising brother-in-law. He has honored me with his hatred, he makes no secret of it, as I make none of my complete reciprocity of sentiment. You American

people go in for a lot of family affection—honour their forebears, and that sort of thing, due, I think, principally to the fact that you don't know anything about them. It's unpleasant to be forced to realise that your husband and your children are descended from blackguards, and when you've studied some of the annals of the Glendaire library you'll be brought to that realisation, my dear, and then perhaps you will be glad to remember what I tell you now. There's not an ounce of Gresham about Pat. So, of course, there can't be even half an ounce in that fine little chap of yours."

"He's exactly like his father."

"Thank God he's not like his uncle," Mrs. Fortescue admonished her; "that is, of course, if you believe in God. I hear it's no longer fashionable. However, read the Glendaire annals, and you'll believe in the devil, which is even less fashionable. And if the annals don't convince you, just devote a little time to the study of my son John. Now get that boy of yours and we'll go for a turn in the park."

And two days later when Dorothy set out for Ireland, Mrs. Fortescue warned her again—"Keep your eye on that other son of mine; Pat's a fool, but John's a devil. Good-bye, my love; I wish you

every happiness in your beautiful home. You'll know where to come if you ever want me."

"Oh, rot, mother," cried her dutiful son, who heard only the last part of this valedictory. "Of course I know where to come; I've been coming any time this last fifteen years."

"I was talking to Dot," said Mrs. Fortescue.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE travellers were in a condition of intense excitement when at last the train stopped at their station and they found themselves the centre of a vociferous, if not over-clean, crowd. Haggard men in threadbare coats and hats of every vintage greeted them with hoarse cries of "Welcome to your ladyship; long life to your little lordship; welcome home, my lord. Glory be to God, but he's yerself and Mister John over again. Ay, but he has his mother's eyes on him," maintained one old man more observant or more daring than the rest. "He has his mother's beautiful dark eyes, the saints give him long use of them."

Dot turned to this last old man and smiled her all-conquering smile. It galvanised him into coherent speech. "The coach is up beyond the turn, your ladyship, ma'am," he wheezed. "They was in dhread one of the horses wouldn't like the train. And how *would* he like it, bad cess to it, roaring and pawing like Jonah's whale. 'Twill be here this instant minit, though. The master's driving himself."

These predictions were soon fulfilled. A commotion, made of a jingle and a jangle, the beat of hoofs, the rattle of chains and the "Whoa there, steady there" of the driver's voice, soon resolved itself into "the master" driving himself and a very beautiful brown four. A groom appeared at the leaders' heads, another sprang into being beside the wheelers, the crowd fell to technical criticism of the horses and Pitty Pat howled with glee. The master alighted and proved to be so exact a replica of Pat in every outward sign that Dot required all the evidence of bright sunshine, Pitty Pat jumping at her side, James busying himself about the luggage and Pat beaming upon her to persuade her that she was not suffering from some multiplication of vision. Never had she seen such identity of appearance. But she had not long to marvel, for John was before her, hat in hand, with a pretty speech of welcome to which she responded as prettily. He helped her to her seat upon the box and then turned and lifted Pitty Pat, the ridiculous cause of all his miserable days and sleepless nights! A handful of soft flesh with a spark of life in it. A little chap in a white jersey, white flannel trousers about six inches long (for James had carried his point) and a white knitted cap. The little chap finding him-

self in a stranger's hands turned to survey that stranger.

"It's your uncle John, old fellow," his father informed him. "Buck up now, and do the polite."

Pitty Pat drew himself backward in his uncle's embrace, looked at him eye to eye for a moment and then struck him in the face, full and fair, with all the energy of his little arm.

"Jimmie" was all he said, and perhaps the warnings of that counsellor had something to do with that extremely awkward introduction. Every one apologised, every one explained. The nurse wept with mortification, and Pitty Pat was hustled unceremoniously up to his mother. The men took their places, the grooms sprang aside, the beggars raised a faint cheer and the four browns set out at a swinging trot upon the six-mile drive to Glendaire Castle. For the first mile Pitty Pat devoted his efforts to sitting as far as possible from his uncle and to achieving hair-breadth escapes from falling off. He then turned his attention to the horn and the smiling man who sounded it. The man looked kind when Pitty Pat viewed him over his mother's shoulder. Also James was at the back of the coach. It was a pleasant place. He would go and sit with James. He did. And when the confusion, caused by his

transfer, had subsided and he was standing upon the thigh of his valet, that delighted retainer exclaimed:

"You done just right, my lord. We was all watchin'. As clean a knock-out as ever I see! An' the first blood, too, sir. That counts a lot. You showed a very proper spirit, sir. An' now O'Shaunessey—that's O'Shaunessey with the horn, sir," and the delighted performer ducked his head and touched his hat—"shall play you something suitable upon his instrument. 'Old 'ard, sir, for a minute and let 'em look at your legs. Clean as velvet," he pointed out to his colleague, "and that strong in the 'ocks it would amaze you."

"Jimmie," remarked his youthful lordship, "Jimmie," and kissed him over the eyebrow. His mouth was very wide open. He was happy. He liked the music O'Shaunessey played. He liked masculine society and bright liveries. He liked to crouch against James when low-growing branches—all flower-laden and sweet—patted him on the back and dropped blossoms down his neck. Yet even these delights did not hold him long and he was standing beside his big father held in place by that father's strong arm, when the brakes were set, the horses reined back, O'Shaunessey sounded his horn with deafening effect and the coach

dropped down a sharp hill and turned into the single street of the little village of Ballycreel. There were flowers everywhere. Great branches of them nailed to the door posts or projecting from the tiny upper windows of the few luxurious houses which had an upper floor. Some of the more exuberant decorators had thrown flowers upon their roofs, where the frowsy thatch held them in place. A few flags added a note of more vivid colour, but indeed the blue petticoats of the women and the scarlet dresses of the little children were vivid enough. Pat leaned forward and put a hand on Dot's shoulder—"The village of Ballycreel," he announced. "Your people, sweetheart," and neither he nor his wife found time to look at John. Which was a pity.

Enthusiasm may have been perfunctory at the beginning, but when the Ballycreelers actually saw before them, or rather above them, their own young gallant captain with his jolly friendly smile, so unlike the master's lowering expression, they cheered with more sincerity. When they saw her new ladyship, so young and friendly looking, so beautifully dressed, so delighted with her welcome, they cheered vociferously. But when they saw Pitty Pat standing so straight in his little white clothes, his black eyes full of puzzlement and of

laughter and his cap held in his fat little fist, then Ballycreel lost its head completely and would have taken the horses away—would have dragged the coach up to the castle with their own loyal strength—had not "the master" been sitting on the box. And presently when the last little cottage was left behind and the coach was mounting another hill almost as steep as that just descended, Ballycreel expressed itself more articulately.

"Thanks be to God, they're back," O'Shaunessey's mother remarked to her neighbour, Mrs. O'Driscoll, "and by the looks of them ther's a good time coming for the village. God send they'll get rid entirely of Mr. John. 'Tis the divil's own life we've had with him this great while back."

"The saints grant it, woman dear," Mrs. O'Driscoll answered. "Her ladyship had a kind face for all her hat was so feathery. There'll be some hope now for the sick and the sorry in the place. You might as well go to the stones in the road as to Mr. John. He's greatly altered this last few years."

From which it will be seen that the blight of Pitty Pat had spread from the castle on the hill to the hovels in the valley.

CHAPTER XXV.

ANOTHER group of vociferous well-wishers was gathered at the big gate and here a banner, upside down it seemed to the new-comers, waved them welcome.

"Who put it up?" asked Pat, "and what's that word on it?"

"Betty Banbridge sent it," John replied. "It's something Gaelic and appropriate to the joyful occasion. She is looking forward," he added, turning to Dot, "to making a thorough Gael of you."

"That would be only fair," remarked Lord Gresham. "America owes us a Gael or two. Of all the rabid Americans under the stars and stripes the most rabid began as Irishmen. Now, darling, watch! These are the beeches I told you of. Grand old chaps, aren't they? The place is looking magnificient, John," he added. "Those clumps of laurel and evergreen are new. Stunning, aren't they, dearest, against the gray beech trunks."

"Stunning," Dot agreed rapturously.

"So good of you to say so," John said. The little sentence sounded simple and sincere enough.

He was bearing the position rather well. He directed his sister-in-law's attention to points of interest and told her the legends associated with them quite as though he were, as she imagined him to be, glad of the society of his kind after his too long solitude. She remembered how Pat had told her that this brother of his always assumed the position of host and she saw that what her husband had said was quite simply true. It was impossible to resist the feeling that they were indeed guests of an hour or of a month. John and Glendaire had managed excellently well before their coming and would so manage long after they should have gone away.

"But we're not going," Dot reflected happily, and aloud she said, "I have a very wise daddy, Pat. If I had seen this heavenly place when we were first married, I should never have gone off to the end of the earth to have my mind improved. I suppose he guessed that."

"Truly, I suppose he did," Pat answered. "Now we're coming to the house, James, give Lord Pitty to me. Now, sir, look upon the home of your ancestors."

"And thrill," Dot admonished her son. "This is a very psychologic moment for you and me, my dear."

Whether Pitty Pat thrilled or not it would be difficult to say. He certainly looked eagerly enough at the great, many-windowed, many-towered castle which rose among the trees. By some heart-breaking whim of feminine coquetry it looked, John thought, more beautiful than he had ever known it, on this day of days when he must resign it.

To Dot it was a piece of fairy-land. She had many photographs of it from all angles and aspects.

Pat had described it all over and over again, and yet she was quite unprepared for its wonderful beauty, for the dignity and quiet of its proportion, for the marvellous colours which the years had given to its austere granite walls.

She knew what room lay behind each window; where the wide stair paused under stained glass, where the great hall ran from east to west and so caught the first sunlight in the morning and held the last twilight of the evening.

A great sweep of gravel lay between the house and the gardens. From it the terraces sloped steeply down to the lily-padded lake which, in that direction, bounded the garden. The hardly less beautiful woodland, beginning at the pond's far margin, led up, ever up, broken sometimes by

patches of walled pasture and farm land, to a towering purple mountain. Other mountains rose all about, purple, blue or orange, as the sun shone on them or as clouds trailed across them. Off to the north a black cloud showered slanting rain into the gray-green sea and brown-sailed fisher boats raced for the shore.

"In all our travels, Dot," Lord Gresham remarked, with entire conviction, "we never saw anything like it. Now, did we?"

"We did not," replied his dutiful wife.

"I hope you will be happy here," John courteously broke in. His manner was all that a solicitous host's should be, and it conveyed no hint of his almost overpowering desire to drive straight down the wide steps which led so gently to the smiling pond and to plunge the whole coach load into its unruffled depths.

"Dear old chap!" said Pat. "It *is* good to be at home again. Ah! there's Mrs. O'Leary on the steps! There, Dot, with the black dress and the widow's cap. And there they all are!" he went on as the sound of wheels brought other figures—in livery and out of it—to support the dignified housekeeper. They seemed an overwhelming house staff to their new young mistress unaccustomed as yet to the nature and habits of the Irish servant

and the enthusiasm with which he will perform the minimum of work in a maximum of time. The maids, the butler and the housekeeper stood upon the steps. Grooms, footmen and under-gardeners swarmed upon the avenue. A few of the more important tenants came out through a long French window with young Jarvis Burke and the two village clergymen. Father Sheehan and the Reverend Summers walked together in a unity which always amazed their much more militant parishoners. Every one was excited, almost hysterical, and here as in the village it was Pitty Pat—absolutely unconscious of his importance in a scene which he nevertheless thoroughly enjoyed—who aroused the most enthusiasm. When Lord Gresham, wisely keeping his heir in his own custody and not risking another scene, stood on the steps with Pitty Pat on his shoulder and thanked his people in a few hearty words for their welcome, Mrs. O'Leary and the maids shed tears and Dot the democratic was instantaneously converted to the oligarchical system of society. Her husband and her child were the rulers of this fair land: these affectionate people. She stood beside them delighted, transported and heard loving words of welcome in a strange soft accent which made the words more sweet. John, perforce, stood near

her, and while Pat was talking she, looking from face to face before her, saw upon one—the face of an old woman—such a blaze of malignity, murderous malignity, as made her shiver even in the midst of warm sunshine and joy. The eyes were fixed not upon her but upon John. He seemed, however, quite indifferent to all about him. His moody face was turned to the north. His moody eyes saw nothing but the storm and the falling rain.

Presently the crowd, having been drilled into some order of cheering by Father Sheehan and by him then led into exhausted silence, faded away: the servants retired to neglect their duties, the important tenants had withdrawn after being introduced to Dot—sometimes indeed to their wandering over-lord—and peace settled over the scene.

Pat took Dot on a tour of inspection. Pitty Pat held a court of maids up in the nurseries with Mrs. O'Leary as chamberlain; John locked himself into the oak room; James, after a visit to the herb garden, taught his colleagues to celebrate the occasion in mint juleps; and Jarvis Burke stood at his window and watched for such glimpses as were vouchsafed him of the sauntering earl and countess. His heart was full of thankfulness. For he knew

as no one else did how urgent had been the necessity for their return.

And she was so lovely. Such beauty! Such youth! Such a winning lovely way with her! How he had dreaded the woman he had built up from his own reading and from John Gresham's predictions—"The Vulgarian."

"I know you," had been her greeting. "You are Jarvis Burke. I've learned to know your writing as well as I do my own. And isn't this all lovely: the day and the people? I know you managed the people," she flashed in one of her swift intuitions, "and I'm so glad you did."

Jarvis, who had slaved like a stage manager to wring enthusiastic demonstrations out of an apathetic tenantry, who had in some cases descended to bribery in his efforts to undo John's paralysing influence, had utterly disclaimed this sweet reward.

"But I know, I know," she insisted. "Did you ever read 'Lord Fauntleroy' when you were little? Do they ever have it over here? I'm thinking that my little boy is like Cedric."

"And I'm thinking," Jarvis answered, with more temerity than he would have dreamed possible—"I'm thinking that you're very like 'Dearest.'"

"Bravo, Jarvis," cried Pat in high delight. His travels had made him accustomed to the instant havoc wrought by his wife. She had grown up in an atmosphere of adulation and apparently no amount of it could spoil her. Her pretty grace of manner was never misleading and never misunderstood. She accepted admiration as she accepted the sunlight: glad when it was shining and contented when it was not.

So Jarvis sang psalms in his soul—he had gone in physical fear for many months——

John sat in his room and gave himself up to all the demons of hatred, fear, despair and envy. And Pitty Pat, escaping from a maid who was cultivating the attentions of a groom, fell into the fountain among the goldfish which poor Renira Banbridge had coveted, and was rescued—the water was about twelve inches deep—by the wide-mouthed Pluto, already the child's self-appointed guardian. John saw them toiling up the steps together in very wet disgrace.

"Even my dog," said he.

CHAPTER XXVI

PAT so vigorously championed his brother, and so bitterly denounced what he considered his mother's treachery to John, that Dot was quite prepared to look smilingly upon this new relative. She found everything at Glendaire Castle so excellently ordered, the upper servants so well trained, and the horde of assistants drilled into such silence and self-abasement, that she experienced none of the unpleasantness she had anticipated in assuming control there. John's taste, ability and economy were everywhere apparent, and the Countess of Glamoran being her father's child, rejoiced in the atmosphere of thrift and neatness. And how could she suspect or believe anything but good of a man who was, even in her eyes, confusingly like Pat! Constantly she mistook them for one another, to Pat's great amusement. But by some undulled intuition, Pitty Pat never wavered in identifying his father. Pat never wearied in setting traps for his son and never once was Pitty Pat caught. He would never allow himself to be lured into intimacy with his uncle. He never repeated the *faux pas* of his introduction

to him. But the spirit of it remained through all their intercourse.

"Pitty Pat no likin'," he would consistently remark in his now rapidly enlarging vocabulary.

If Pitty Pat had been gifted with the power of reading his uncle's mind, he would have found in that dark chaos ample cause for enmity. For, definite and strong where so much was blurred and ill-formed, John harboured a determination to be rid of Pitty Pat. If the mother could be involved so much the better, but the boy, the heir, must be removed.

Upon the whole the household saw but little of John. He rode about the country during the day, and in the evenings shut himself up in the oak room and discouraged, always courteously, interruptions or invitations to join the family circle. Pat accepted this aloofness as a proof of John's sensibility. "He sees we're honeymooning still," he told his wife, "and he thinks, dear old chap, that he'd be in the way."

And so he would. There was no room for any third person in the uninetrrupted conversations and silences, as they sat upon the terrace and watched the slow darkness closing down upon Glendaire, saw the little lights flash out in the village below them, heard the birds settling to rest in all

the trees and, from the grove across the lake, the full sweet song of the nightingale. They sat there evening after evening, often silent, but always hand in hand; and Dorothy found at first none of the melancholy of which Mrs. Fortescue had complained. For her the world held nothing but peace, ineffable peace. She had her man and her boy, a home beyond compare, and as the days went on she hoped to gain the love and devotion of the countryside. Life seemed buried in rest. Yet Dorothy knew that this could not be all of life. There was no struggle, no effort and, but this reflection she tried to stifle, no growth.

Day followed day unchangingly except for the weather and even that seemed monotonously changeable. Some showers, some sunshine; some nights of heavenly clearness and some of a tangible darkness, a soft thick palpable darkness when space seemed to spread no farther than arm's length.

For some weeks the young alien occupied herself in adjustment. There was much of it to be done before she could live the life she had chosen, and her clever eyes soon showed her that all the yielding, all the adapting, would fall to her. The Greshams were as Greshams had been any time these five hundred years. Pat in the democratic

atmosphere of Connecticut had flared for a moment into democracy and altruism. But once on his native ground he had returned to his type. His social principles and precepts were identical with John's. Only the leaven of the Moriarty good-humour kept him sweet. Dorothy often strayed into the long gallery and wondered whether she would pass as all her predecessors had, and leave no trace, no proof, of all the high and enlightened thought which she yearned to spend upon Glendaire and the village of Ballycreel. Yet Pat was loving, always gentle, generous and easy-going. He seemed at first quite happy that she should act the Lady Bountiful, the goddess in the machine. He never tired of telling her how admirably she filled the eye; how exquisitely she suited the stately background. So far she was perfect, cherished and applauded. It was only when she advocated organised reforms or innovations that he grew restive, and the capable, large-hearted, ambitious Dorothy was forced into the position of guest in her husband's home. Only the care of Pitty Pat was left to her. Without him she would have been desolately idle, but the upbringing of an adventuresome boy of three is almost a career in itself.

Both Pat and John were forever assuring her

that she did not—could not expect to—understand the Irish people. Dorothy grew weary and resentful of their parrot cry but always something occurred to show her how true it was. The shifts and evasions of the poor, the religious hostility which animated them, their patience, fortitude, even their existence, in the conditions which obtained at Ballycreel and the surrounding glen, were absolutely incomprehensible to her.

The attitude of the people of the better class she found equally amazing. Everywhere indifference. Placid, unemotional ignoring of all the standards which she held sacred. As well advocate cannibalism at the tea-tables of well-bred Wicklow as that starting-point of all her principles—"All men are born free and equal with an inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Sometimes she wondered whether she quite understood even her own husband. Why had he worked so strenuously at learning all that could be learned about tobacco, and why did he make no effort to put his learning to some use? Was it the natural reaction after his travels? Was he only resting? Preparing?—Or was it the fatal, rotting procrastination and laziness which, to her quick nature, seemed at the root of the whole nation's decay?

Her Little Young Ladyship

She was very young and very much alone. She lived in an atmosphere of age-old custom and association of which she knew, at first, nearly nothing. As she grew more familiar with it, as she caught tags and glimpses of the beginnings and the meanings of things, which now went on as though they never had had either, she began to wonder, only to wonder. She had no standards by which these things could be tested. In her own country a man's choice generally shaped at least the name, the nature of his career. Here she saw the working of predestination in its earthly sense —saw and shuddered.

On the day of her arrival she had demanded an introduction to the prophetic yew. She had laughed at it gaily enough then; laughed at the great iron bands which had been riveted upon its ancient but yet sturdy limbs by superstitious Greshams; laughed at the care it showed, the wide lawn upon which it stood alone near one corner of the house.

On that first evening, too, she had been delighted, when she had asked John whose was the empty place beside her, to be told:

"For the possible stranger for whom the hospitality of Glendaire Castle is always waiting."

Pat and Jarvis Burke and she had made merry

about the custom then. She had sketched likely and unlikely claimants of their hospitality. But since that first day the spell of Ireland had fallen upon her. She had found that the windows of her golden room looked out on the sombre yew tree and that she could sometimes hear the whispering of its branches through the darkness. Morning always brought her to the window to see how her prophet had borne the night. And once when a storm had wrecked it she had sat miserable at her window, telling herself what an utter fool she was to think that the life or death of an old vegetable could have any bearing upon the fate of a dark-eyed little boy born in Edgecombe, Connecticut. Pat found her crying and shivering. He held her in his arms and laughed at her and petted her and congratulated her upon her Irish temperament, but she never more treated the yew with levity and she developed a creepy conviction, most unsuited to the festive board, that when unhappiness came to Glendaire Castle it would enter by the open door and sit in the empty place. She tried to laugh at this variant of the legend but she did not quite succeed, and the end of the dinner hour was always welcome to her.

CHAPTER XXVII

JOHN was too clever a man to allow this growing unrest of Dorothy's to pass unheeded. He fully appreciated her power to make things even more difficult than they were. So far he had been able to keep Pat quiescent and to counteract Dorothy's restlessness, but, knowing that in the ultimate analysis love was stronger than gratitude, he sensibly set himself to allay her new young ladyship's suspicions. It was not entirely to secure her peace of mind that he introduced her to the more prosperous and loyal of the tenantry. The one great object of his life was also involved. If he could persuade her and, through her, Pat that affairs at Glendaire and Ballycreel were prosperous and satisfactory it might be possible after another month or two to induce them to go lightheartedly forth upon some further travelling.

So the tenantry grew accustomed to seeing her new little young ladyship riding about with the master and shrewdly they guessed that he had inaugurated the custom in order to cut them off from any conversation with her. Through all

these excursions she was told, sometimes plainly and sometimes by inference, that she could never hope to understand the Irish: the same old patter with which both Pat and John met all her questions. Nevertheless she understood a great deal more than either of the brothers suspected; and incidentally enjoyed herself thoroughly.

There was one pilgrimage which they frequently made. It was to a little cottage high up on the side of the glen. Apparently no farm or pasturage was attached to it. In a little outhouse there were the inevitable donkey and a covey of "chuckens." There were also always in evidence a baby or two and a father and mother. The father seemed always to be at home. The only accessory which a stranger would seek was a source of income and supply.

No time was wasted in introducing Dorothy to the source of so much affluence.

"Take her ladyship in to see granny," John commanded the woman when he had helped Dorothy to dismount. "I'll stay out here with the horses."

The cottage as it stood in the afternoon sunshine might have come from the White City so complete was it in every expected detail. The smoke-filled outer room, where a baby struggled for breath,

and the peat fire made everything blue; the proper pots and pans hung round the fireplace; the proper loaf of griddle bread burned itself to death on the griddle. A young woman led Dorothy past all these verities to a little inner room where a spotless old woman lay in a spotless bed.

"Granny," cried Dorothy's conductor, "here's her young ladyship come to see you."

Dorothy stepped across the room—almost one stride sufficed—and took the hand outstretched to her. It was gnarled and bent and gray like the claw of an eagle.

"God bless your pretty face," said the old woman when Dorothy had come into her still wonderful range of vision. "God bless the pretty face on you. There does be quality comes here sometimes to look at me, and glory be to God the faces on them would turn milk, an' it fresh from the cow."

"Do many people come to see you?" asked Dorothy whom John had left uninformed.

"Of a fine Sunday in summer they comes in dhroves an' they brings their little black boxes wid 'em for to make picture-post-cyards out of me. 'Tis a new way they have of making their fortunes."

"That must be charming," said Dorothy still vague.

"Bedad is it?" the dame answered. "On'y I'd be thankful to know when they was comin'. But sure we don't know, an' herself—" she nodded toward the outer room where the younger woman could be heard moving about—"herself kapes me ready to be took any minit."

And Dorothy saw, with sympathy, that to everything which might bear a ruffle, a ruffle had been attached. They sawed her at neck and wrist. Her cap fairly bristled with them. Even her pillows boasted them and along the top of the sheet ran an all-conquering one which threatened momentarily to behead her.

"Your daughter takes great care of you," Dorothy congratulated her.

"She's not me daughter. An' why shouldn't she?" was the old person's cryptic remark. "She's me grandson's wife, or maybe me great-grandson's. An' where would they all be if it wasn't for what they get from the quality comin' to see me? I'm a fortune to *them*, too."

"It must be a great satisfaction to know that you're so valuable to the quality and to—did you say your—your great-grandson?"

"Yiss, or me great-great-grandson belike. Nobody knows an' I disremember. I'm a great ould ancient age entirely."

"Indeed you must be."

"I am that, one hundred year or maybe two. I was born before babies was wrote down in books, so nobody knows how old I am. A larned gentleman come down from Dublin an' he made it out I was a hundred an' twelve, but sure he only guessed it. Woman and girl I lived all them years in Ballycreel. A sight of Greshams I've seen in power over us, your ladyship, an' you'll not take it wrong if I tell you that the young earl, your husband, is the only one of them that ever had a heart. That Mr. John," she added vindictively, "him they calls the master, is the worst of the lot. Take an old woman's word for that, and watch him."

And when Dorothy rejoined her waiting cavalier she remembered his mother's words and reflected that the Honourable John might come off badly if judged by a jury of "ould ancient" ladies.

Through all the pleasant spring and summer days one thought occupied John Gresham, one question clamoured for an answer: how to get rid of his brother and his brother's family. Most urgently he desired the banishment of his brother's wife. The great wrong of Pitty Pat's existence was bad enough, but now she threatened to bring shame and ruin upon him. Those eyes of hers

—Pat thought them beautiful, poor fool—were as keen and as restless as a hawk's. And her impertinence! She had actually asked to be shown the books of the estate, saying that she felt idle and that book-keeping was her one real accomplishment. No demand could have flecked John more sharply on the raw. Ever since Pat's marriage they had been concealed, with good reason, even from the unsuspicious Jarvis Burke.

Dorothy's would be by no means an unsuspicious scrutiny. John turned her off with some trivial politeness and then sought Pat. He treated that long-suffering earl to such a tirade upon his devotion and upon the ingratitude and suspicion with which it was met, that he precipitated a most unhappy interview between husband and wife.

John was delighted with his success, and went on to strengthen it whenever opportunity offered. He was forever complaining of Dorothy and her want of affection and gratitude toward him.

"I declare," he burst out, with surer intuition than a saner man would have shown, "she resents my resemblance to you. I often catch her looking at us and I know what she is thinking. Well, I suppose married life is agreeable to those who fancy it, but it's remarkably hard on the rest of the world."

"Dear old chap," said Pat, laying his hand on his brother's shoulder, "I know. I feel it, and so does Dot." This was as near as Pat ever allowed himself to come to any mention of his brother's great infirmity and the greater abnegation it imposed.

"The old days were jolly," John went on. "Do you remember how you would bring down some fellows and we'd wake the country up for a few weeks? That was life and freedom. No responsibilities, no hours to keep. Ah! those were the days. You seem to have lost spirit since then. You never poked about the place for such a length of time as this."

Pat made no answer and John went away to allow his words to take their full effect.

They did. For Pat, recalling life as it had been four or five years ago, found little in it to weigh in the balance against Dot and Pitty Pat.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DESPITE John's efforts it did not take Dot long to see that the little village of Ballycreel was not quite the happy valley she had thought it to be. Sore poverty and discontent seethed below its courtesy. Hope gave place to bitterness as the days passed and his lordship still strolled or rode among his people, friendly, cheerful and irresponsible. The "master" was still the master. His lordship still met their prayers with, "Have you asked Mr. Gresham about it? Well, I will remind him and see if something can't be done." And Ballycreel's dawn of better days died away as the master, more moody, more unreasonable and more unapproachable than ever went his thunderous way.

The slightest show of interest even on the earl's part roused a very devil in his brother. Pat was too happy and contented to do more than offer an occasional suggestion, but at the slightest word of criticism John tendered his resignation and had to be bribed back into office with ever fresh promises on Pat's part to leave Glendaire and Ballycreel to his management.

"Why don't you let him go?" Dot had asked one day when Pat, made nervous and irritable by his brother's threats, was complaining of John's unreasonable sensitiveness. "He can't be happy here; any one can see that he's miserably *un*happy. Why don't you let him go, dear? I am sure you and young Burke and I could take care of the place quite well. This is a madman's whim of his that only he in all the world can understand the people and manage the place. Even I can see that you are much more popular than he. Let him go."

"Where to?" demanded her husband. "Can you imagine John any place else? The mater prejudiced you against the poor old chap. I tell you, Dot, I wouldn't willingly hurt his feelings for the world. A nice reward it would be for all his devotion to turn him out now! And look here, Dot, I want you never on any provocation to apply that word madman to John. He may be over-conscientious, overworked, that's all."

"But if he's doing harm," she pointed out. "I grant you the place is wonderful, the management perfect, but the people are miserable."

"Oh! they'll be all right," her husband blithely answered, "as soon as we get this tobacco scheme in operation. John's working at it now; you have

no idea of the amount of work involved in inaugurating a thing like that."

"Then here at last," said Dot, "I can help him. I have often done that kind of thing with father, and your brother can't refuse to let me take some interest in our own concern."

"Ay! But he will," Pat told her. "You would have thought that I could have been of some use to him, but no. If I go beyond the mere theory with him, the poor old chap gets quite hurt and feels that I undervalue his services."

"But you must, Pat," cried Dorothy. "Does he pretend that he can do the thing without us? That you, who spent years in investigating, are not a better authority than he who has just done some general reading, or than I who was almost brought up in the tobacco field? Pat, dear, you're unreasonable. Tell him to go the next time he makes the threat. And while he's working off his bad temper we'll have the whole place reorganised, the tobacco started and all the people happily employed. I really think that in this matter he's working against us, delaying, postponing, and meanwhile the people are starving. He puts you off by talking about investigating fertilisers and the brand of tobacco most suitable to this climate. You and I know more about it than all his stuffy

old authorities. Why don't you tell him so and begin? We'll take the responsibility; it is really ours, in any case."

During the delivery of this long address Dot noticed that her husband was not wearing the frank and open look which generally characterised him. His eyes were almost hostile as he listened to her and he sat in silence for some moments after she had stopped.

"My mistake," said he then slowly, "was in letting you meet the mater. I can see that now. But I thought you were too sensible to be influenced by her. I can see, however, that you have sided with her against John, and I might as well tell you that I'd let the whole tenantry go to the dogs, starve, rot or emigrate before I'd offend the man who has devoted his life to my interests, before I'd drive my brother out of the place which he has loved and beautified. He's a sick, unhappy, wretched man, and I wouldn't cause him an hour's additional unhappiness if it was to make the whole glen bloom like a rose. I know as well as you do we could get on without him—better perhaps than with him—for the people are ungrateful to him—but I tell you there's no secret I would guard from him more sacredly than that one. I solemnly believe, Dot, that the knowledge would be the death of

him. Be a good girl and never speak of it again."

Dorothy had reckoned upon Pat's devotion to his brother, but as the time went on she saw more and more clearly that John's influence upon everything he touched was harmful. She began to see too that life's problems were coming very near to her and to feel that she would have to face them alone. Before her marriage her father had always championed her; since then her husband's approval and encouragement had been her chief stimulant and her chief reward.

CHAPTER XXIX

DOROTHY soon stumbled upon more than hearsay evidence of her brother-in-law's methods and morals. She, with Pat and John, were riding down to the proposed tobacco fields one morning when a headache which had slumbered in the background of her mind since breakfast was brought to a climax by a canter up a hill, and she was forced to declare herself incapable of going farther. John was all courtesy; Pat all concern. They would return instantly with her. But she would not hear of such a course; to go back would be as trying as to go forward. They were to go on and look at the fields and she would wait in a little plantation of pine trees which bordered upon the road. They would not be gone more than an hour and by that time the quiet, the rest and the cool little breeze would have quite restored her. Pat wanted to stay and bear her company.

"If you don't go on without me," she threatened, "I shall go on with you and most probably ride myself into cerebral meningitis—a pleasant thing that would be for you to have upon your

consciences. Besides, it's nonsense. I shall be quite safe here. We are on our own place, are we not, John? No one will interfere with me. Now tie up 'White Stocking,' and go away. All I want is a little quiet."

So the well-trained White Stocking was tied to a tree and Dorothy was left to her own devices. It was pleasant and very cool under the pine trees. Little birds, unlike any she had seen in America, came and looked at her. A rabbit loped by. The pain in her head became less and less absorbing now that her hat was off. The glen lay spread out before her, its little farms and cottages clustered about its thin church spire. Far at the other end lay the village, picturesque enough when distance hid its squalor and only the soft pinks and blues and yellows of its "whitewashed" cottages could be seen. High on the left Glendaire Castle, her home, her baby's fair inheritance. Whenever she achieved a moment's solitude she always set herself with an always unsuccessful effort of realising that this was she, Dot Forbes, of Edgecombe. She tried to conjure up the Dot Forbes of four or five years ago, and to recognise in her the Countess of Glamoran of the present. She was thinking a little wistfully of her father and wishing all wistfully that the distance which separated her from

him were less overwhelming when a young woman with a baby in her arms came up the hill and stopped just as Dot had done under the shadow of the pine trees. Since the advent of Pitty Pat a baby had always been irresistible to Dot. At the mere sight of one questions bubbled in her. How old was it? Was it a boy or a girl? How much did it weigh? How many teeth had it? And the answers generally went to prove the great precocity and prowess of Pitty Pat. Dot had never doubted her son's superiority over all other children, but it was always pleasant to find proof of it. So she smiled now at the tired young woman and beckoned her into the shade. The baby was exhibited and appreciated, the young peasant woman, somewhat overawed at first by Dorothy's riding habit, soon grew confidential, and when Dorothy spoke of her own boy she kindly omitted to emphasise his great perfections. The girl, for she was little more, broke out bitterly:

"Ah! but it's different for the likes of you. You know what your boy will be coming to. He will be a rich man when he grows up like the quality that own this place. 'Tis a quare wurrld, ma'am," she went on. "I was up beyont at the big house tryin' would I maybe get to see her new young ladyship. An' a long an' a weary walk I had for

me trouble. That's me little weeney house you can see at the head of the glen amongst the trees. She was out when I got there—an' Mr. Maloney, him as is butler there this thirty year, tould me as Mr. Gresham has given orders none of us is to be let see her. I seen his little lordship, though. A gran' child he is, God bless him."

"And why did you want to see her new young ladyship?"

"About the rint, ma'am. Sure what else? An' maybe I'd say a word about the roof. Four years ago we wor payin' five pound and now they've rose it—little by little—to seven. I had me receipts here to show to her young ladyship the way she'd know it was the truth I'd be telling her. You can look at them yourself, ma'am. But sure she was out!" she ended with a sob. And she regarded the receipts with so much reverence—proof as it were of her respectability and of her husband's industry—that Dot perforce took them from her outstretched hand and saw that they did indeed cover five years rental at a steadily increasing rate. And each was signed in the accurate unmistakable hand of John Gresham. "But this year we can't even pay that. The cow died on us. An' thin herself—me husband's mother—took a could on her chest sleepin' under the drips——"

"The drips?"

"In the roof, ma'am. An' we lost her. An' what with the doctor an' the buryin' an' all, we're behind. An', ma'am, there's but one way out of it unless Mr. Gresham will be aisy with us. Mike will have to go to America or Australia belike, and I'll have to go back with the child to me poor old father until he's able to send for me out to him. So I wint up the big house this mornin' with the child in me arms thinkin', maybe, her new young ladyship would say a word for us with Mr. Gresham. All Mike wants is time. But sure she was out—pleasurin' belike—an' Mr. Burke says Mr. Gresham wouldn't listen to him. I don't know what I'll say to Mike whin he meets me at the stile."

"You just say to him," Dot cried, "that you didn't find me at home, but that you met me in the wood here and that I told you to tell him how sorry I am about his mother, and that I gave you six pounds to buy another cow, and that he needn't bother about paying any rent at all until times are better with him. And tell him, too, that the roof will be mended to-morrow."

The girl's amazement and abasement frightened Dot and woke the baby to shrill yells. Abasement she had seen in southern Europe, but there

she always knew it to be a pose, a good-natured exaggeration of the *buona signora's* importance and beneficence, a joyful recognition of the natural fact that she should give and they should take, each with perfect grace and propriety. But here was no affectation. In the storm of blessings and tears with which this girl met Dot's simple little kindness there were the surge and the echo of elemental things: life, home, child, the dear sight and touch of her husband, all had been given back to her by this chance-met stranger on the roadside. Great sobs shook her. She handed the wondering child to Dot and cast herself face downward upon the scented ground. And Dot wept with her in horror to think that such tragedy had been so near, in joy that it had been averted.

And so that the twin brothers riding back had found the sister women.

"As bad a case as we have in the glen," John remarked when young Mrs. Mulready had expressed her dutiful thanks, bobbed many curtseys and hurried up the road. "I suppose she's been working on your sympathies. Our professional Irish beggar can beat the world at that."

Dot availed herself of the preoccupation natural to remounting and made no answer. John availed himself of her silence to make his first tac-

tical error. He recognised the clumsiness of it almost as quickly as she did, and he loved her none the better for leading him into it.

"Her brute of a husband," John explained to Pat, "is one of the most undesirable tenants we have. Hasn't paid a penny of rent for three years. But, of course, since Dorothy has taken the woman under her wing, I shall see that the roof is mended. I think Mulready pulled the thatch down for his cow's bedding. You have no idea of the sort of thing that goes on here."

"Nevertheless," Dot replied, after she had recovered from the discovery that Pat intended to ride silent beside her instead of dashing to her support as was his loving habit—"nevertheless, I must ask you to fulfil my promises: a roof, six pounds and a release from this year's rent."

"Upon condition," said John, making an unmirthful attempt at gallantry and consideration, "that you consent to let yourself be guarded from scenes like this morning's. You had better refer these people to me."

"As I do," Pat remarked.

"Precisely. Why should you keep a dog if you intend to do your own barking?"

"Nonsense, dear old chap," cried his brother, accustomed to such ungenial complaining. "Dot

had no idea of interfering. It was a most natural mistake. She can't be expected to understand the people here."

"But I hope," Dot persisted, "to understand some of them in time. Lies and liars are not unknown in the Nutmeg State," and the pretty little smile with which she made this admission was quite lost upon the Honourable John. Only Pat caught it and flashed back:

"Set a thief to catch a thief. Leave an Irishman to deal with the Irish." And again there was no laughter on John's face as they rode on. And Dot knew that between her and the accomplishment of Ballycreel's salvation stood the sinister figure of John Gresham: dishonest, diseased, shunning the co-operation which would inevitably spell detection and strong enough, as she amazedly admitted, to keep her from the accomplishment of her designs and even to take from her the full enthusiasm of her husband's loyalty. Between these two stood Patrick Gresham, easy-tempered, stubborn and amazed. There was nothing in his simple heart which would help him to understand this situation. John was the best chap in the world; Dot was the dearest woman. How could he have foreseen that they would disagree? Yet to disagree seemed their evident intention, and Pat resented very earnestly

the confusion of mind which they thrust upon him. He knew, of course, that Dot was right in principle, but he could not understand why she burned to put that principle into practice when she knew that its accomplishment meant hurting the feelings of the brother to whom he insisted upon considering himself so overwhelmingly indebted. He vaguely wished that he could find some harmless outlet for her energies, and when they reached the castle he found that the American mail had provided it.

Dorothy looked up from her letters to announce that a long-promised, oft-postponed plan was at last to be carried out.

"Mother and father sail on the *Lusitania* next Wednesday. Oh! Pat, darling, isn't it splendid! I never dared to quite believe they'd come."

"It's the best news I've heard for a century," Pat acquiesced heartily. "John, you'll be delighted with Mr. Forbes. *He'll* be able for you. I'm not, of course, I'm only a duffer—but there's nothing he doesn't know about estates and tobacco and that sort of thing. He'll put you up to no end of dodges."

"That will be most kind of him," said John. "I shall be delighted." But his delight fell from him as he closed the door of the oak room. Jarvis Burke looked up from his work.

Her Little Young Ladyship

"'The Vulgarian,'" said John, "has a great honour in store for us. In about ten days we are to be introduced to her most remote ancestors, her father and mother."

CHAPTER XXX

NO prediction could have been less welcome to John Gresham than that contained in Pat's wholly innocent words about Mr. Forbes's experience of estate management and the enlightenment which he, John, would derive from it. John did not crave enlightenment in any form, and he was under no necessity of being put up to dodges. By a simple dodge of his own since the birth of Pitty Pat, he had deflected twenty thousand pounds of his brother's money to his own bank account, and he knew that there would be no chance of blinding or distracting such a man as Dorothy's father was described to be. He had lately begun to feel that deceiving even Dorothy was growing difficult. Therefore his nerves and temper grew steadily worse.

Dot and Pat motored into Dublin to meet the Forbeses. Poor Jarvis Burke was harried and criticised incessantly. When no other crime or shortcoming of his presented itself, John could always fall back upon his clerk's admiration of "The Vulgarian" and predictions as to what her parents

would be. They had had no three years of preparation such as their daughter had enjoyed. To John's distraught mind and raging envy Burke's loyalty to the young countess was a personal insult. He did not, however, suffer it in silence, and Jarvis found it hard to bear the continual abuse and ridicule, the carping petty fault-finding, the sneers and hatred to which John Gresham devoted his eloquence during the time which separated the arrival of Forbes's letter and the morning upon which Dot and Pat motored into Dublin to meet the steamer train from Queenstown.

Mr. Forbes was alone, but in answer to Dot's anxious and amazed inquiries, he replied:

"There, there, honeybunch, don't you fret. Mother's all right. Why, daughter, ain't you glad enough to see your dad? Ain't one parent enough at a time to come visiting. Now, don't you fret and worry about mother."

"But where is she?" reiterated Dot.

"Well, now," her father answered, "you wait until James and I get my trunk away from these baggage-smashers, and then I'll tell you all about it. But don't you fuss yourself; mother's all right. Do you suppose I'd be here if she wasn't?"

This was a reassuring consideration, and Dot comforted herself with it while Mr. Forbes, his

son-in-law and James rescued two new steamer trunks and an old dress-suit case from the maw of the luggage van and the clutches of the porters.

James had come up from Glendaire more slowly with the luggage waggon, and him Forbes greeted with great cordiality. He was, in fact, delighted with everything, but most of all with Dot, who had, he maintained—greatly to her indignation—grown several inches since he had last seen her.

The age, the dignity, and the size of Dublin surprised him. Though somewhat better informed than his daughter, he was quite unprepared for the capital of despised Ireland. Its wide streets, its stately public buildings and busy traffic amazed him, and the glimpse he caught of Trinity College, its venerable buildings surrounding its brilliant lawns, overwhelmed him and would have struck him dumb if he had not been so full of conversation.

"About mother now," he began, in answer to Dot's entreaties. They had by this time passed through the worst of the traffic, and were speeding out toward the open country. "Well, daughter, I hope you ain't going to feel hurt about her; but, just as the last moment, mother found she couldn't do it."

"Do what?" questioned Dot.

"Leave The House," answered her father solemnly. "She got everything ready; she fixed it so Mrs. Petty would come up every day and see after the two girls we were going to leave there; she got all her clothes ready and packed, and then she found it was too much for her. She couldn't leave The House alone. So she stayed and I came over to see how our baby is getting along. So far as I can see," turning to Pat, "she's getting along all right."

"Oh! I am, I am," cried Dot; "but what about mother? How is *she* going to get along without either of us?"

"That," Forbes answered, "is something I thought about considerable on the boat. By the way, I had a great time on the boat. There was a tobacco man there from Virginia, Edgar Wharton; you both know him, or, at least, know of him."

They signified assent.

"Well, we found one another early in the game, and he introduced me around quite a bit. He knew lots of the passengers, and say, Dot, you'd be proud of your old daddy if you could have seen what a good sea-dog he made. I tell you, I am going to travel every year from now on, and mother's going to travel, too. She would have just loved it. I'll explain to you my little idea about mother

when I've time. Just now I want to look at the country."

And there were plenty of strange sights to catch his shrewd eye. The jaunting cars, the donkey carts, the numerous and expensive motor cars, the high stone walls, topped sometimes by ivy and sometimes by broken glass—that libel upon Irish hospitality—the brilliant green of the grass and trees, the unaccustomed bareness of the mountains, the wonderful roads—all fascinated him.

"It isn't a bit queer," he said. "Somehow it looks all right. It isn't a bit like anything I ever saw, and it's less like what I expected. But its fine! I thought it was much greener; I don't call a country very green when all the mountains are yellow and purple. Is it flowers that makes them look like that? You know I can't remember ever seeing a mountain that wasn't covered with trees; these strike me as funny. Is it flowers?" he repeated.

"Gorse and heather," answered Pat; "and as for the trees, they vanished hundreds of years ago. Every army that ever invaded Ireland cleared all the land they could because the forests proved such good cover for the natives. The only way to keep a forest open to travellers was to cut down every

tree in it. That is the reason," he added, "that we're burning peat or importing coal now. We have coal of our own, but we don't use it. We import what we want and export what we have. We lose money both ways. We have a natural passion for bad bargains."

"Well," Forbes answered, "it don't sound right to me. But it's your own business and I suppose you understand it. I'm glad it ain't mine."

He found several occasions to make this reflection. Glendaire delighted him, but the little village of Ballycreel in the valley disgusted and amazed him when he walked through it before dinner, on the first evening of his visit. Dorothy rather dreaded the expression of his opinion at dinner and tried during the earlier courses of the meal to keep the conversation in America.

The meeting between Forbes and John Gresham had passed off quietly. John assumed his only agreeable rôle—that of host—and Forbes was greatly interested in this man so like his son-in-law, yet so unlike.

"A cleverer man than Pat," had been his verdict; "got a stronger will, too, but I wouldn't trust him as far as I could throw him. What's he doing round here anyway?"

Pat had later elucidated the latter point.

"Managing for you?" repeated Mr. Forbes. "What's the matter with you that you can't manage your own business?"

Pat explained.

"Maybe so, maybe so," Forbes answered, "but you are a young man, Pat, and a strong one, and a good one. Your brother may be all that you say, but so far as I can see that's no reason for him to do your work and for you to live here doing nothing. I say," he pointed out, with a kindly hand on Pat's shoulder, "so far as I can see—of course, I ain't seen very far—it's your own business, son, and I've always found that people get along better in this world by attending strictly to their own business, which"—and he laughed good humouredly—"I ain't doing now, but which I intend to do from now on."

His prowl had led him to still graver doubts and questions, but according to his theory he would have left them unexpressed had not John Gresham seen fit to cross-question him at dinner with the purpose of quarrelling with him as soon as possible and of then making capital of his injured feelings and refusing further commerce with the new-comer.

"Tell us, Mr. Forbes," he insisted, "what you thought of the village. First impressions are al-

ways interesting, and I suppose you have never seen anything like it before."

Forbes met his eyes quietly. "No," he answered, "I don't know as I have."

"In what way, sir," questioned Jarvis Burke, "did it strike you as being unusual?"

"In its relation to this house," was the answer, "in its contrast to it. I never saw human beings live in anything so small and dark as those huts, and I never lived myself nor knew any one that lived in a house as elaborate and expensive and beautiful as this one. I thought such contrasts were out of date."

"Perhaps they are in your country," said John.

"Excuse me," Forbes replied, "we never had them there."

"America," said John, "is too new to have found its levels. It took twelve or fourteen hundred years for Ballycreel to go down and Glendaire to go up."

"You mean that you have had the upper hand for all that time?"

"Yes."

"That you have ruled here?"

"Yes."

"That you have drawn your income, your social

position, from the village and the outlying farms in the glen?"

"Yes, until about a hundred years ago when this land agitation began. Since then we've invested in other things."

"I know that," said Forbes, "but still it's your tenants and your land that make you what you are. Lords of the manor, the Glamorans of Glendaire. They give the kid his title, don't they?"

"I suppose so," John admitted.

"Well," said Forbes slowly, "you ask me what I think. I think that Ballycreel would have been better off and happier if there never had been a Gresham at Glendaire. That's what I think. Of course you have your views, and I'd like to go into them; I'd like to understand this system. We'll have to talk it over when I get back."

"Back!" echoed Dot. "Why, father dear, where are you going?"

"I'm going to Edgecombe, daughter," Forbes answered. "Mother ought to be here, and I propose to fetch her. By the time I get there I guess she'll have had enough of living in an empty house. And even if she hasn't, I can tell her enough about you all and this lovely place to brace her up enough to come over. Give me some of those snap-shots you have of her viscount, and if they don't fetch her

I'll eat them. I've seen many a kid," said Forbes judicially, "but never one I put in your class, daughter, until I saw my grandson. He'll fetch mother. And I don't mind saying," he went on, with his charming smile, "because I think it reflects great credit on my judgment—I don't mind saying I picked a wife that I can't get along without. So I'm going home to get her. This is Thursday; I'll catch the Saturday boat."

CHAPTER XXXI

DOROTHY FORBES had never loved her father as passionately as did the Countess of Glamoran. Even the two days that he spent at Glendaire Castle were enough to rekindle in her all the enthusiasms and ideals which had languished in the plaintive air of Ireland. Before his arrival she had determined to tell him nothing of the perplexities of her position. Before he left she knew, though he had said no word, that he had surmised them all, that he sympathised and understood even the smallest emotional item She saw, too, to her delight, that Pat grew momentarily more like his American self and that the affection and admiration existing between the two men in nowise changed. Indeed, Forbes's feeling toward his son-in-law increased rather than diminished when he saw to what perfection of charm and culture Dorothy had attained under his loving care. She was the most radiant, gracious, beautiful creature he had ever seen. All that he had ever dreamed for her was here. Her life was noble, dignified, free from care and happy except where John Gresham's

shadow fell across it, and he reflected, that shadow would soon be gone—Pat would break out. And Pat, irritated by John's sick selfishness and self-assertion, rejoiced in the warm, honest affection of his wife's father. Nothing had occurred since the Glamorans' return to Ireland which drew husband and wife so close to one another as this shooting star from Edgecombe, gone almost as soon as it appeared. For, true to his determination, Forbes sailed for America on the Saturday after his arrival.

The succeeding Wednesday brought a telegram from Queenstown. It threw them into a maze of speculation, for it ran:

"Meet 12.15 train Kingsbridge Station, Dublin, to-day. Forbes."

The most reasonable conjecture which they could form was that Mr. Forbes had been deflected by the beauties of Killarney and of southern Ireland; that he had abandoned his purpose of returning to Edgecombe, and was coming back to them. They were, therefore, quite unprepared for the fluttered, almost tearful appearance of Mrs. Forbes in a most elaborate travelling gown and a perfect flock of porters.

"Oh, my dears, my dears," she gasped, when at last she became articulate. "I just couldn't stand

it over there without father, not for one other minute. Where is he? Didn't he come in with you?" she marvelled.

"No," answered Dot, "no; darling, he could not come in with us this morning."

"He isn't sick?" demanded her mother. "Don't tell me father's sick. I just *knew* he would be with no one to remind him about wearing his heavy flannels on the boat. He never did have any judgment about flannels."

"No, dear, no, he's not sick," Dot reassured her; "he's just as well as well can be."

"Then why didn't he come?"

"Because, darling—" Dot began, then halted and tried again. "You see, dearest mother, he missed you—he missed you terribly."

"Yes," panted Mrs. Forbes, "and I missed him."

"Of course you did," her daughter acquiesced. "And so he made up his mind to do just what you were making up your mind to do."

"I was making up my mind?" repeated Mrs. Forbes vaguely.

"Yes, darling."

"—To come over to him."

"Well, and he was making up his mind to go back for you."

"Then where is he?" demanded her bewildered mother.

"Now, you're not going to feel badly about it," Dot urged. "You see, it will be all right in just a little while. But father sailed on the *Lucania* last Saturday to go back to Edgecombe to fetch you. He is now some place on the ocean having a lovely time, for he told us, didn't he, Pat, that he loved to travel." But Mrs. Forbes was beyond the reach of such comfort. She fell into tears.

"Gone!" she repeated; "father's gone!"

"To fetch you," Dot reminded her.

But Mrs. Forbes wept on. "And on the *Lucania*, too. Why, Dorothy, we passed the *Lucania* a day or two ago. They wanted me to go and look at her, but she was on the other side of the ship and I was all settled in my steamer chair and too lazy to move. And father went by! I let him go by!" she added excitedly, as though a slight effort on her part might have averted the catastrophe. "I just sat in my deck chair and let him go all the way back to Edgecombe. I came four thousand miles to be with him and now you tell me he's gone! How perfectly, perfectly awful!"

"Of course we told you," said Pat, trying to relieve the tragedy of the atmosphere. "We thought we might as well, since you'd be likely to notice it."

Stern determination flashed into Mrs. Forbes's gentle face. "James," she cried—for history had repeated itself and James was again presiding over the luggage—"James, you put every one of my things back on the platform again."

"Ma'am?" cried James.

"Mother!" cried Dot.

"What now?" asked Pat, all in varying shades of remonstrance.

"I mean what I say," announced Mrs. Forbes. "Have them put on the platform. I'm going to take the next train home."

Unfortunately one of the big liners was to touch at Queenstown that night, and most unfortunately Mrs. Forbes knew it. No remonstrances, no prayers could hold her. In vain they represented the loss of time involved in her plan; in vain they pointed out that the sensible course would be to wait with them at Glendaire until Mr. Forbes—to whom they could cable—should return to her and to them.

"If you try to follow him," Pat calculated for her, "it will be nearly three weeks before you're both back with us."

"But it will be only five days," Mrs. Forbes replied, "before I get back to father. I'll send him a cable to wait for me in New York, and I'll get

there two or three days after he does. We'll come over together to visit you just as we always planned to, and just as we would have done if I hadn't been so foolish about The House."

"By the way," asked Pat, "how is The House?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Forbes wildly and defiantly, "and I don't care. I went to New York to say good-bye to father; well, when I got back to Edgecombe I simply couldn't bear to go into that house. I stayed one night at Kenny's Hotel."

"Oh, mother," remonstrated Dot. "You couldn't!"

"I did," repeated her mother, with a flashing eye, "and then I went back to New York so as to be there to get the first boat. I made up my mind that never again would I let anything separate me from father. I am going back to him now, and I hope you children will understand and be pleasant about it, because"—and she clenched her gray-gloved hand—"because I am going right straight back to him. I don't care what you say."

"Bravo!" said Pat; and he kissed her. "I'll arrange it for you—luncheon first."

CHAPTER XXXII

THE visit of the reunited Forbeses began much as other visits, whether of parents-in-law or casual acquaintances, must. They were shown the glories and the curiosities of Glendaire. They were driven to points of interest in the neighbourhood. They made the acquaintance of the dozen athletic young men and women who came to play tennis or croquet, to drink tea or to flirt in the gardens.

These young people delighted Mrs. Forbes, and they in turn were delighted with her. She officiated at the tea-table till the weary contestants came to her for refreshment, and then she would sit in a bevy of these light-hearted youngsters and listen to their nonsense. She belonged to a Folk-Lore Society in Connecticut and thought to improve the shining hour—the very shining hour—by gathering Irish folk tales, and her new young friends supplied her with wonderful specimens.

Her chief informant was a red-headed young subaltern from a regiment stationed near Glendaire. He had a great gift for narration and an utter contempt for facts.

"Now the banshee, Mrs. Forbes," said he one day when the heat had stopped all but the most enthusiastic tennis players. "I wonder if you quite understand the power of the Irish banshee."

Dorothy from her long chair near her mother threw a threatening eye upon him and he returned it with a most unregenerate one.

"The banshee," he went on pleasantly, "howls by night, never by day. It's a mixture of vulture, a woman, a little parsley sauce on its hair and—"

Dot sat up and glared at him.

"I withdraw the parsley sauce. It bays like a dog, it howls like a wolf and it always means death."

"Death?" repeated Mrs. Forbes in dismay.

"Death," he answered. "If one of those things, and they're common enough, should come crying round your chimneys some night, the whole lot of you would find yourselves dead in the morning. When you are writing your notes on the banshee put it down as a bird to be avoided."

"I will," promised Mrs. Forbes.

"Would you like me to tell you," young Harrington went on, "about the ghosts and the legends and the horrors that belong to this house, ay, this very house in which ye live so thoughtlessly?"

Again Dot warned him, this time with uplifted finger.

"Nay, nay, your ladyship," he answered obediently, "I don't intend to do it now. I have no wish to cast a gloom over yon innocent prattlers," and he pointed with his teaspoon at John Gresham and Renira Banbridge, who at a little distance from the others were sitting in moody silence which seemed now to be their normal state.

John favoured the man of war with a glare which might have blighted a less confident spirit, but young Harrington went serenely on.

"If Mrs. Forbes will meet me in the fairy dell to-night between three I shall a tale unfold——"

"You ridiculous youth," said Dorothy, "what do you mean by between three?"

"I don't know," said Harrington. "'Tis the hour of tryst. There are a great many more unpleasant stories connected with this castle than any of you know about."

Mrs. Forbes enjoyed herself so thoroughly that when the last of the guests had gone she forgot her custom of silence and turned to address John Gresham.

"I don't know when I have had such a perfect day," said she, "and I never felt more at home in my life, even at The House."

"You flatter us," said Gresham.

It was manifestly impossible in the presence of Mrs. Forbes's geniality for John to maintain his rôle of host. Mrs. Forbes made herself his hostess, watched for his comfort, gave him little talks on health and flannels and earned an enmity only less vindictive than that which John accorded the young countess. Both she and her husband regarded him with acute pity, and when they met Renira and realised her tragedy they mothered and fathered and petted her as they did every sick or sorrowful fellow-creature.

"When we go on our travels," Mrs. Forbes would say, in her comfortable cheery voice, "we'll take you with us. Our own little girl can't very well come with us, and there was always a girl in our plans and I'm sure your mother would be willing to lend you to us."

Renira was grateful and doubtful. Her life at present was one hideous blend of love for John, of knowledge that she could never marry him and of terror at his wild outbreaks. Many a saner man ambled about the wards of many a lunatic asylum. His two worst obsessions were that Glendaire was his and that "The Vulgarian" with all her troupe —even with Pat, if necessary—were to be driven out of it.

When Mrs. Forbes before speaking to Renira had laid her project before her husband he had hailed it with enthusiasm.

"The very thing," said he; "as nice and sweet a girl as I ever saw—clever, too, and entertaining when that Gresham ain't fussing her up. Has it occurred to you, mother, that we're going to have trouble with that darned barnacle? Well, we are. We'll stay and see it through and then you and I and Renira Banbridge will light out for the wonders of the world. But trouble first, mother, trouble first."

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHEN the Hon. John Gresham understood that it was Renira, not Dorothy, who was to be swept from his path, he vanished altogether into his own suite of rooms, refused to admit either Pat or the doctor, and terrified Pierre, his already terrified man-servant, into silence. Every one believed he was undergoing an attack of his old disorder, and he was, and when at last he emerged, shaken, furtive and exhausted, poor Renira had cause to bless the chance which had thrown the Forbeses in her way. Renira's mother had hailed the idea of her daughter's liberation with incredulous gratitude. Bitterly she had mourned the heart-break she could do nothing to ease.

No one thought of Sir Richard Banbridge as a factor in the arrangements. He never seemed to be aware of the presence or absence of his offspring, but when he returned from a Kerry horse show and discovered that a plan had matured during his absence he promptly put his foot on it and set his countenance against it. Renira on the verge of tears reported this at the castle and John Forbes

set out in a dog-cart to interview the baronet at the Monastery. Sir Richard was reported as being in the stables and Forbes caused himself to be driven there. Forbes was in exactly the costume in which Pat had first seen him and he now removed his broad straw hat and ran his fingers through his mane of hair.

"Looks a darn sight better than the house," he commented. And several long-necked hunters stretched inquiring heads over the half-doors of their loose boxes. Presently Banbridge appeared, thin, red-faced, irascible, but for the moment a gentleman.

"May I ask—" he began.

"I'm John Forbes from over Glendaire way. My daughter is Pat Gresham's wife, and I've driven over to have a few words with you."

"You antedate my intention by less than an hour," Banbridge replied. "I had intended driving over to see you."

He led the way to the house and into a musty apartment dignified by the name of study. It was full of stuffed creatures and their glassy eyes struck Forbes unpleasantly. So did his host. And so, most of all, did his host's first remark.

"I understand, Mr. Forbes, that you have allowed yourself to form some quixotic plans in re-

gard to one of my girls. I wish you to understand, sir, that the Misses Banbridge are not objects of charity."

"Well, now," said Forbes slowly, "that depends——"

"Sir!" snapped Banbridge.

"— on what you mean by charity. Take it in its Bible meaning and I guess it's just what they all of them need. But I didn't come over to argue with you. I've come to hear your objection to my wife's plan to combine her own pleasure with Miss Renira's. Mrs. Banbridge has nothing against it."

"Mrs. Banbridge is a fool."

"Maybe; maybe. I can see one foolish thing she did."

Banbridge looked at him quickly. What did the boor mean? Was it possible? No, he decided, it was not. He had by sheer vileness of temper and vocabulary lorded it over the neighbourhood for so many years that he considered it impossible that this ponderous slow-voiced stranger could be laughing at him. In all the archives of the Monastery, no one had ever laughed at Richard Banbridge.

"And so," Forbes was going on, "the ladies were so upset about this thing that I thought we'd better get together on it. Now what's your objection? If

you want to know anything about me you can ask the earl. I've got several connections in London, too, and I guess I'll come out all right. Mrs. Forbes is the loveliest woman in the world, and I want to know, since the girl's mother is willing, what you've got against the plan."

"I decline," said Sir Richard, "to give any reason. I simply forbid it."

"Just going to shut down on it like a snapping-turtle? Well, the other two poor girls look like you brought them up on some such system."

"The indulgent American parent," sneered Banbridge. "We don't go in for that sort of thing over here."

"Funny," mused Forbes, "'cause we got your like over there. We call them," he remarked, "skunks. And we don't care one particular damn about them. Now that's how I feel about you, and that's the reason that whether you like it or whether you don't Miss Renira is going with us. And if you try to interfere or to make her unhappy I'll come over here and I'll break your back. I broke a man in the factory once, a fine fellow he was, too, but he went crazy in the engine-room and threatened to bust the whole place up and kill all the boys and girls. He was strong, but I was stronger, but I couldn't hold him. He was getting away from me

and so I busted him to save the lot. I don't believe we'll quite get to that. I guess you'd better think it over again. It so happens that we've both got sample daughters to produce. You've got Miss Betty and Miss Joan. They're your raising. I've got my Dorothy, and I guess any expert would give me the blue. I guess that 'll be about all I have to say. Miss Renira comes with us."

"Take her and be damned to you," was the fatherly benediction.

CHAPTER XXXIV

SIR RICHARD BANBRIDGE was still in the trance produced by conversing with a gentleman who spoke so simply of killing people with his bare hands, when the Hon. John Gresham was announced.

"I've come," said he, "to see you about this ridiculous proposal to allow Renira to go wandering up and down the world with my dear sister-in-law's people. That's only the thin end of the wedge. I believe there's a scheme on foot to adopt her altogether."

"They're entirely welcome to her," responded the fond parent. "They may have Betty too, and Joan but I suppose that would be expecting too much."

John began to swear with ingenious blasphemy that he would prevent Renira's going.

"If you try it," said Banbridge "there's a gentleman in a straw hat and a white waistcoat who will break your back across his knee. He called upon me this afternoon to make the announcement. I've been threatened with shooting many a time and never paid any attention to the fools,

but there's something horrible in the thought of being scrunched up by that big man's big hands. And he looked," added Banbridge, "tolerably in earnest."

"He would," John acquiesced. "And the worst of it is that he's quite up to doing the thing. Do you know Thunderbolt—but of course you do, you sold him to me—well, the countess, 'her new little ladyship,' bah! took a fancy to him and thought she'd like to try him. She knows as much about riding as Pat has taught her since they arrived. We were down at the stables, she and her father and I, and she was in her habit, so they put a side-saddle on Thunderbolt."

"Rather close to murder, that," said Banbridge.

"It was entirely her own idea," John answered, "and it was her own horse, too. It was no affair of mine. Well, of course, Thunderbolt reared. He'd never felt a riding skirt flapping against him, so up he went with Dorothy, who had no more idea of what to do than an infant. The men were afraid to run it, but that brute, Forbes, caught each side of the bridle in a hand like a man-trap and simply dragged that horse back to earth. As soon as he got him there he whips up his off fore leg and Thunderbolt was about as dangerous as an arm-chair—couldn't move, of course—then down slips

Dorothy as calm as a sunset and says she '*did* enjoy it so.' Now what do you expect to do against a man like that?"

"He must be an awful trial," said Banbridge sympathetically. "You may not be able for him in the open, but there are other, quieter ways, my boy."

John threw away his cigar and rose. "He's as bad in quiet ways. I haven't an instant's peace, and that girl of his is as bad as he. What do you think their latest is? To look over the books! To see whether the estate will bear the introduction of tobacco. I got Pat to head them off. But what's the use of heading off a wild man who slays things with his hands."

"Never heard of anything like it in my life," said Banbridge. "The Hunt ought to take the matter up. It must be devilish for you over there, but all the same I'm not going to keep Renira here for you to make a laughing stock of her. You can't marry her. I can't do anything for her alive or dead, so if this Gargantua of a fellow is willing to assume the expense of her, he's welcome to her. She's no use to me. You spoiled me. You spoiled her. You've made a regular sniveller of her, and she the most promising filly of the lot."

"Will you keep her," said John, "if I can get rid of the Americans—perhaps of Pat—and we all settle down to the old quiet life?"

"Perhaps," acquiesced Banbridge—"perhaps she wouldn't snivel so much then."

And John rode moodily back to Glendaire, revolving new and old plots to achieve his purpose.

CHAPTER XXXV

AFTER a sleepless night John Gresham appeared in a terrible state of temper. He felt that he must make some one suffer or lose the remnants of his reason. He first tried Jarvis Burke, but the confidence, the open trust and liking with which the whole family treated him, made him unsafe as an outlet for wrath. He next went to the stables and attacked a groom, but the groom, spoiled by the presence and sweet reasonableness of my lord and my lady turned and walked away from him.

Then as he stood in the sunshine of the stable yard he remembered one spot in all the island where he could create fear and command obedience. He ordered the saddle put on one of the strongest horses in the stables and, as he left the gates, turned toward the mountain which lay at the head of the glen.

The road soon died away but John rode on. Following sheep paths among the heather and sometimes leaving even those faint tracks and striking across stony furze-covered territory, he came

at last to a road upon the other side of the mountain and followed it for five or six miles. It was almost two years since he had last ridden that way, though it had once been familiar to him. He could not have accounted for his impulse to take it now. Perhaps it was the knowledge that here at least he was lord paramount. Here were creatures who lived by his favour, and who could be made to bear some of the burden of his desperation.

He stopped at a cottage: a miserable affair built against the side of the hill which formed its rear wall. Its thatched roof was frowsy and grass-grown; its door hung awry, but these structural deficiencies had not daunted the spirit of its tenant. A red-blossomed geranium showed between the curtains of the single tiny window, more sturdy flowers grew against the house, and the wall bore a coat of immaculate whitewash. A tiny shed leaned against one end of the cottage—it, too, was whitewashed. Large stones marked the pathway from the road-side to the door—a distance of about four feet—and they, too, were whitewashed.

At John's approach an old woman looked out at the open upper half of the door—and it is to be hoped that the visitor was not in search of wel-

come, for surely there was none in that hostile, dauntless old face.

"So you've come," was her greeting. "At last, at long last."

"Have you anything to complain of?" said Gresham. "Hasn't the money reached you regularly? I needn't ask, I should have heard from you. Is the child well?"

"He is," she answered shortly.

"Show him to me," John commanded.

"He's within with the little baste," she replied, and went to the door of the shed. "Mickey," she cried, "come here to me out of that and talk to the gentleman."

"What gentleman?" asked a clear little voice, and a child, golden-headed, blue-frocked, barefooted and fearless, came out into the sunshine. A donkey and several hens followed him. They all stood and stared at the handsome man on the handsome horse while he stared at the boy. He was perhaps nine or ten months older than Pitty Pat, but poverty had matured him. Pitty Pat was a baby; this was a responsible member of society. Nevertheless the likeness between the two was startling.

"Come here," called Gresham, and the child approached unfalteringly and looked up at him

with untroubled eyes. "Are you afraid of horses?" he asked.

"Am I what?"

"Afraid!"

"I am not afraid," said the child simply.

"You don't look it," John admitted. And certainly there was no trace of fear in his earnest little face. That earnestness, John decided, was the chief difference between this boy and "The Vulgarian's" pampered brat. Otherwise they might be—great Heaven, here was the way! waiting placidly in this cabin while he had been tearing his mind to reach impossible ineffectual ways. Here was a certainty. Let Dorothy catch a glimpse of this boy older than hers but in other respects his twin. Arrange that she could find no explanation. Get the child and his grandmother into another county if necessary. What could be more simple? There was only one necessary condition and that was the absence of Pat. And Pat, blast him, seemed to have taken root in Glendaire, having fellow-officers down from London, and behaving generally with disgusting domesticity. But these things could not go on forever, and John found it more bearable to wait the execution of his plan than to agonise without one.

CHAPTER XXXVI

"DAUGHTER, dear," said Forbes one afternoon as she was strolling up and down the terrace with him, "I met up with quite a piece of information in Dublin to-day."

Dorothy's face lightened.

"Anything important?" she asked, brushing her cheek against one of the hands that were in the habit of slaying men.

"No, no," Forbes went on. "This ain't a big important thing, although I ain't saying its consequences wouldn't stretch a right smart ways. I'm worried about how mother's going to take it, that's all."

"Tell the story," urged Dot.

"All right," said Forbes, "it runs like this: I was in Dublin this morning, and in that swell shopping street of theirs I saw a window all full of waists, and right in the middle there was a lovely one that looked as though it was made for mother. I went right in, and what do you suppose? There wasn't a thing in that whole darned store that wasn't made of plaid. Well, a fellow dressed like an

undertaker comes along, and I point out the waist. Then says he, 'Is there nothing else? A necktie or handkerchiefs for yourself in your own plaid?' 'Cut that out,' says I. 'I am an American.' 'For how long?' says he. 'Well,' says I, 'if it would help anybody any, I guess I could go a grandfather. Nobody ever seemed to care where he came from and I'd hate to tell you where I think he went.' 'Step this way,' says the undertaker, and he yanks out a great big book. 'Name of grandfather?' he says, and, like a fool, I says, 'Donald Forbes.' 'Of Kirkintilloch?' says he. 'Never heard that of him,' says I, 'but he looked bad enough to have it true.' And, daughter, I'm a boiled bluefish if that chap didn't turn back and show me the name of my grandfather, written down among all kinds of swells:

"'Lady Agatha married the Duke of Ki Yi.
"'Lady Mary married Baron Beanfeast.
"'Honourable Alexander married Tottie Two Toes.
"'Donald emigrated to America; further career unknown.'

"Then it gave the kids. And then that undertaker sold me everything in a Forbes plaid he

had in the store. It ain't what you'd call a pretty plaid, but it's *ours*. So I'm having dresses made for you and mother"— Dot shrank visibly and he went on—"and a complete suit of kilts——"

"Oh no, Dad," she cried.

"—for Pitty Pat," said he. "The Viscount Glendaire, Dorothy, is also one of the Forbeses of Kirkinkillin."

"It wasn't that before," said his daughter. "Try it again, dear."

He tried and failed and was for the time hopelessly lost. His mistakes made it impossible for Dorothy to remember which syllable came first and this descendant from Highland clans and glory was obliged to telephone to the "undertaker" for his birthright. He returned to Dot with his name clearly written on a card. "I've ordered a copy of that big red book. I'll get one for you if you say so, and I guess Pitty Pat ought to have one too. He's a Forbes of"—consulting his card—"of Kirkintilloch. You want to remember that."

For some half-hour or so he basked in his new dignity. He sent for Pitty Pat and instructed that youth in the pronunciation of his new title.

"Fishes," said Pitty Pat as one having a determined mind.

"We'll go and feed the fishes later," his grandfather promised, "but first you must say, 'I am a Forbes of Kirkintilloch.' "

"Fishes," remarked Pitty Pat, with his eyes on the tree tops. "Bwead and fishes."

"You sound like the Bible," said his grandfather. "Got a sort of authority to it. So come on. We'll feed 'em. I'll teach you the name when I get strong on it myself."

They were thus occupied when Mrs. Forbes approached her two magnets, and at once she saw trouble in her husband's face. He had been wondering how she was going to take the discovery of his ancient lineage.

"Just tell me right away, I don't want to be prepared," said she.

"All right," said her husband. "Here goes: I'm a Forbes"—with a surreptitious glance at his card—"of Kirkintilloch. Our blood dates back to the first spill that dyed the Highlands red. We were killed at Culloden. We were murdered on every mountain-side. We were in the court of Mary Queen of Scots. We fought with Prince Charlie and I hope to prove that we married Flora Macdonald. Oh! madam, the Forbeses of"—again the card—"of Kirkintilloch lie dead all up and down the Tales of Scottish Chivalry. Ask

any one you like. Ask the man in Dublin. Ask Sir Walter Scott."

Mrs. Forbes leaned forward and possessed herself of the card. "Been drinking, John?" she asked kindly. "This Irish whiskey is not as innocent as it looks."

"Drinking!" snorted Forbes. "Now there's the gratitude of woman."

He grew a little calmer, when she drew him down beside her, and he described the main points of his morning's discoveries.

"And you accuse me of drinking when I've spent the morning buying dress goods and a belt and some knitted gloves"—Mrs. Forbes quivered —"and some silk handkerchiefs and some ties, and some studs and links and lots of other fixings, like stockings and ribbons. Every last one of them made of the Forbes plaid."

"For me?" queried his wife.

"Why, sure," he answered. "If I'm a Forbes of—where's that darned card?—ain't you a Mrs. Forbes of—" and his wife produced the card and cried ecstatically, "Mrs. Forbes of Kirkintilloch. Oh, you darling, I can hardly wait to get into Dublin to have new cards engraved."

"Going to put that on them?" he asked, nodding at his ancestral title.

"Why, of course!" she cried, and repeated richly, "Mrs. Forbes of Kirkintilloch."

"That will be the finish of every servant girl you hand it to," said Forbes as he took up his hat. "I doubt if even a butler could worry through and look the same afterward."

CHAPTER XXXVII

SO passed several weeks. Mrs. Forbes abandoned "the Palmers" without a sigh and began to study the Scotch accent. Every one was happy save John. The weather did its best though it occasionally broke out "a-sighing and a-sobbing." Harrington and Pat supplied Mrs. Forbes with some of the wildest legends that were ever invented, all about giants and maidens, skeletons, scrunched bones and blood. When she repeated them to Betty Banbridge that scholarly spinster pronounced them utterly spurious, and offered as more suitable mental food the rules of the Gaelic grammar.

Pitty Pat and his grandmother cruised about beatifically. Yet Dorothy was restless.

"Daughter," said Forbes, "I wouldn't."

"Yes you would," said Dot. "You wouldn't stand it as well as I do. Daddy, darling, I don't know what I'm doing or what to think. You know this was never the life I expected. You remember how I used to dream about having some big mission in the world and now it's dwindled to this."

"There's a good deal of time in a life," said Forbes, "and I don't remember as you had any definite date for setting out on your crusade. You wait awhile. The Lord Almighty ain't wasteful."

"But I thought it had all come with Pat. And, dad, it did. There's great work to be done right here. Lives to be made straight and happy; industry and self-respect to be put into them. And, then the disease; the wretched preventable disease. And here they chain me, dad, with all that going on before my eyes. And Pat laughs and kisses me when I protest."

Pat went his careless way for about another week and John's plan hung fire. And then help miraculously came from the one person on earth who would have been most loath to serve him. His mother, Mrs. Fortescue, having passed from one chauffeur to another, until she found one dauntless of the largest policeman and contemptuous of the most solid traffic block, had enjoyed an all too brief felicity and had then participated in a smash-up, which resulted in the wreck of the car—an event which left her beyond the reach of solace—and of her own left hip which did not seem to trouble her at all. Nevertheless elderly ladies may not fracture hips with impunity. There were other less definite but more alarming in-

juries to a tired constitution and Pat was sent for.

The earl obeyed the summons with a double depression. He was troubled about his eccentric but always gallant mother, and then there was the celebration of Pitty Pat's birthday, his first at Glendaire. It was very near. He would be almost sure to miss it and Dorothy would be disappointed. He had had for some time a wretched feeling that Dorothy *was* being disappointed.

So Pat went to London, charging John again and again to take care of Dorothy and Pitty Pat.

To this end John, on the morning of the historic third birthday of Viscount Glendaire, rode over to the cottage beyond the mountain to give instructions to the old woman there.

"I cannot tell you to the minute," he had said, "but we're to dine at eight o'clock. At about nine you'd better be there. You'll have to carry the child and keep his face covered. Wait near the big door, and when you hear me say 'Long life to the heir,' you are to send the boy in: tell him his supper is there and that he is to go and eat it. Then wait on the terrace out of sight of the hall windows and I'll bring him to you."

"And what," she asked, "is this play-acting for—is it for any good?"

"It's for my purpose," he answered as he turned to ride away. "See that you make no mistake."

"It's for evil," muttered Mrs. Moran as she watched him. "It's for evil. Nothing else could make him look so happy."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

PITTY PAT was now in the enjoyment of three summers, a large vocabulary, numerous teeth and a devotion which, if he could have understood it, would have turned his golden head.

All day long upon his birthday his well-wishers and his subjects came to wish him joy. All day long he trotted about and intrusted his tiny hand to the work-worn clasp of his people. All day long he accepted their congratulations and their tight bouquets of hard marigolds and rosebuds, and when evening fell there was still to be a great dinner in the hall—the first at which he had ever been present and over which, in the absence of the earl, his father, he was to preside. There were to be no guests. The household would be, John had predicted, tired enough of strangers before night.

The Viscount Glendaire presided with great dignity over the oysters and the soup. James had arrayed him in a smock of embroidered linen for whose authenticity in material, design and workmanship Betty Banbridge stood sponsor.

"All cottage work," she had assured Dot, before mentioning a price which staggered even that experienced shopper. He looked very small in his father's great arm-chair of carved black oak, and the footmen who were his slaves were obliged to build him into it with crimson cushions. He enjoyed the position for a time because his grandmother sat at his right hand and Jarvis Burke at his left, and with either or both of them he was always happy and generally spoiled.

But to-night he behaved admirably. Across a mass of flowers and golden plate he could see his mother, his grandfather and his uncle John. The table was bright with candles but all the rest of the great hall was in mysterious shadows. The servants vanished into it and reappeared with a charming effect of being quite newly made. The golden fleur-de-lys on the crimson hangings winked at him and through the great door he could see the sweet young night and a single silver star.

Presently even the mysteries of late dinner began to pall and he became restless and sleepy. The butler rallied him with some sweets and whispered the promise of ices to follow, but his little lordship was not to be bribed and so was removed from the chair of honour and tucked into the empty one beside his mother, the chair that

was always waiting for the unknown guest. Dinner progressed as dinners will until at last the cloth was removed and it was nearly time for the ladies to withdraw.

"But first," protested Gresham, "we must celebrate the occasion. Are all the glasses filled? Then let us drink." And he rose to his feet: "Long life to the heir." There was a little sound behind him in the gloom near the open door. "Long life to the heir," he repeated. "Long life," they all echoed; and into the circle of candle light stepped a little boy in a frock as blue as his eyes, a halo of gold round his head.

"Good God," cried Gresham and dropped into his chair. Every one turned to watch the approaching figure. It was Pitty Pat. And yet there was Pitty Pat beside his mother, not sleepy now but wide awake and eager. The child came unhesitatingly out of the shadow and climbed into the empty chair at the head of the table. No one spoke after John's exclamation. The butler after one perturbed glance herded the footmen before him and left the "quality" to deal with their own mysteries.

Pitty Pat slipped out of his chair and went to greet the guest. He had been greeting all day and he was getting to do it with an easy grace.

Mr. and Mrs. Forbes stared, and the Hon. John Gresham turned a ghastly face upon his sister-in-law. He felt ghastly. He belonged to a race of gentlemen.

"There is nothing," said he, "that Pat would not have done to prevent this."

"Pat?" repeated Dorothy.

"Yes, Pat, my unfortunate brother. If you can avoid understanding, then for God's sake don't understand."

Dot's eyes returned to the children. Pitty Pat was piling raisins and cakes upon the stranger's plate. They were both laughing. Mrs. Forbes, who was nearest to them, was staring stupidly. Forbes had aged ten years during the last five minutes. Jarvis Burke rose and left the room. To the last his eyes were fixed on the Countess of Glamoran and she never noticed that he was gone. John too kept his eyes on Dot.

"I do not believe you," she said at last.

"Don't," he implored. "Don't believe anything, not your eyes, not what any one says to you, not any rumours which may have reached you. Believe nothing, except that Pat adores you, and that this child—this wretched, miserable child—is more than a year older than yours. It was all over long ago. Believe nothing but that, and

forget even that if you can. The child has been kept out of your path ever since you came and shall be again." He rose and went toward the head of the table; but Dorothy was quicker. She reached the children first.

"Stop," she commanded. "Don't touch him. You're quite wrong to think that I wasn't in Pat's confidence. Father, mother, I have known it all along. This child's place is here. I propose to keep him—always, if Pat so desires, but certainly until his—until my husband comes home again."

"But you cannot do that," cried John. "You mustn't, really. I don't know what Pat would say to me if I let such a thing occur. The child must go back to those who are responsible for him."

"The child shall stay," said Dorothy. "I have told you there are no secrets between Pat and me, and there shall be none. The child shall stay, I tell you, here in the house of his people."

"Daughter, dear," said Forbes, standing up and taking her in his arms, "you're a noble woman and I'm proud of you."

This was a complication upon which John had never counted, and which brought ruin and disaster nearer than they had ever been.

"I tell you," he broke out, "that you can't do

this thing, you sha'n't do this thing. I shall remove that child, by force if necessary, before Pat's return."

"And I tell you, John," said Dot steadily, "that I am mistress here; I choose to keep the child. Mother, dear, might I trouble you to attend to the arrangements in the nursery? Will you take the children with you and go now?"

And when Mrs. Forbes withdrew with the children, Dorothy turned to her father.

"Dad," she whispered, "dear old Dad, it's awful that you and mother should have been here. It ruins your visit utterly, I know, but you won't mind when you think what it would have been if I had been alone. You and John will forgive me if I leave you for a while; I want to think."

Again she looked straight at John, and again she told her loyal lie. "It is not," said she—"you see, it is not as though I had been quite unprepared. As I told you at first, there have never been any secrets between me and my husband." And so she left them.

CHAPTER XXXIX

JOHN immediately fell to excusing and palliating his brother's offence and all his excuses made it seem only the darker and the more intolerable. Forbes lighted a thick cigar and sat silent in his place at the deserted table. The attention he bestowed on John was not great. Never in his experience of her had he known Dot to tell a lie, but there had been something in her startled eyes and stricken face which made him doubt that she had expected this particular unexpected guest. When she had turned away, her slender body had shown none of its customary strength or elasticity. She had passed out into the evening a sorrow-laden broken woman.

The other hypothesis was equally incredible—that he, John Forbes, with all his experience of men, could have intrusted the dearest thing he possessed to a scoundrel.

"He never meant her to know," John was explaining. "We had nearly completed arrangements for sending the child and his grandmother to Australia, and now I suppose—since you know

the truth—you will be taking your daughter away from us, thinking, rightly enough, that we're not worthy of her. I know that Pat will be guided entirely by Dorothy's wishes." Forbes still smoked. John watched him haggardly for a moment, and then went on again:

"There was a case something like this in Dublin a year or two ago. The wife went straight home to her people in New York, and all the arrangements were made by letter. I suppose the poor girl felt that an interview—after all happiness and confidence had been destroyed—would have been too trying. I've always felt that you wanted to take Dorothy back with you, but I never expected that you would have this unanswerable reason."

Forbes rose. "Young man," said he, "would you oblige me by shutting up. I've got something to think of." John left him striding up and down the hall, a spectre when he passed out of the candles' light, but a strong, dependable, level-headed man when he came into their soft glow.

John went out to break to Mrs. Moran as best he could the tidings that the boy was to be taken from her. Her reception of the news surprised him. He had expected wailings and pleadings,

but the old woman listened to him in silence and when he had finished looked at him still in silence.

"Well," cried John testily, "say what you have to say and go."

"I have this to say," she answered. "May God curse you and torment you as you have cursed and tormented me and mine."

"I care nothing for your curses," said John. "This whole country side has been cursing me for years, and I'm none the worse for it. But if I ever find you on the place again, I'll get you hanged, Margaret Moran, or deported. So now good night to you. Here, turn this way, go along the terrace there and you'll come to a little path that brings you out on the avenue. Go quietly."

CHAPTER XL

MRS. MORAN intended to obey these injunctions, but fate threw in her path a temptation too strong to be resisted. Hurrying along the terrace she almost ran into the arms of the young Countess of Glamoran, who, with bent head and trailing white dress, was pacing up and down in the faint starlight. Here was a chance which all the empty years before her might never bring again.

"My lady," she began. "Oh, my lady."

The white figure turned. Diamonds glittered in her hair, on her hands and among the laces on her breast.

"Yes?" answered the countess absently. "Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Oh, my lady, my lady," she repeated. "Give him back to me."

"Him?" repeated Dorothy—"him?"

"Michael, my lady, Michael—the little boy. He's me grandson, your ladyship, and the only one in the world I have left to me now, and Mr. Gresham is after telling me that you're going to

take him away from me. But oh! me lady, sure you won't do that. He's all I have in the world, and you have a child of your own and a husband of your own."

"Then," said Dorothy, seeing that here she might find an answer to some or her most agonising questions—"then the child's mother is dead?"

"Oh, yes, your ladyship."

"When did she die?"

"Four years ago come June, my lady."

Dot pondered. Four years ago in June Pat had come to Edgecombe. All through that month of romantic, happy courtship the girl lay dying. To believe this old woman would be to believe her husband a monster. He had been making gentle, tender, laughing love to her while the poor deserted mother of his child was dying.

"It was a bad day for Mary," Mrs. Moran went on, "that ever she came to the castle. But Mrs. O'Leary spotted her in the chapel and took a fancy to her face, thinking she looked clever and teachable. And oh! me lady, she was both. A little thing she was, not near so tall as your ladyship, but oh! the pretty face of her and the soft little voice! She had little hands, too, almost like a lady's, for I never let her do the hard work. She seemed too little and weak for that, and I was

always strong. Signs on, here am I alive and strong still, God help me! as far off from death as ever! And her lying under the sod. And nothing left to me of her but the child you're taking away from me, and the little bits of jewellery the landlady gave me at the end."

"What landlady?" asked Dorothy.

"Up in Dublin, your ladyship. He took her to an elegant house. She had lodgings like a queen. 'Twas there the child was born, and it was there they let me see her at the end when all was over. He wasn't there himself when I came, but the landlady, a good woman, God bless her! told me something of how happy Mary had been there, and she gave me the child—he was a big bit of a boy then—and the brooch she used to wear and a chain and two rings besides the wedding ring. That's all, me lady. That's all I have for all the years I loved her, and I'm still strong, your ladyship, and still far from me rest."

"But don't you understand," said Dorothy, speaking connectedly for the first time, "that neither you nor I have any choice. We must do what is right and best for the child. His father's son should live in his father's house. You know that. You must know it. He must be educated, sent to school. He must have all sorts of things

which you could never give him, but which you would always want for him. If I gave him to you now and you took him back to poverty and care, you would be doing a selfish thing and you're not a selfish woman. You'd regret it as long as you lived. Don't you see that you would?"

"But oh, me lady," cried the old woman, thinking of the desolate days and the lonely nights before her. "You don't understand. There's no one to work for now. Nothing to hope for."

"I do think of that," said Dorothy, "I do understand. And with all my heart, I'm sorry. But you could not be with him always. You say you are very strong, and indeed you seem so, but you'd have to leave him some time, and you'd have to leave him poor. Let me keep him now, and you'll never have to fear that he will suffer want. And oh! believe me, I'm not taking him from you entirely; you can always come and see him when you will."

"I will not come," said the old woman proudly, after some thought. "I told your ladyship I had strength, and so I have. What would the gentleman you're going to make of him be doing with a grandmother like me? I have done me duty by him ever since he was given to me, and I'll do that last duty now. I beg your ladyship's pardon for

keeping you so long and bothering you with my troubles. I'll be getting back now. But will you tell me what room you're going to put him in? Which will be his window? Maybe I'll see a light shining in it of a night. And will you tell them that has the charge of him, that he'll do nothing for fear—he doesn't know what fear is—and everything for love. And he likes milk on his potatoes when they're hot; and don't let him have his tea too strong. I always knew the time would come when he'd be taken from me. I'm not fit to bring up the likes of him, and I'm glad it's you that has him, for you're a kind and a lovely lady, and I know you'll be good to the child."

"I will," cried Dorothy earnestly. "Indeed, indeed, you can trust me."

"I do," said Mrs. Moran. "I trust you. Show me the window now and let me go."

Dorothy pointed it out to her and they parted. Then she resumed her restless pacing and her miserable thinking. Pat, her Pat, a widower with a child. He who had seemed the very personification of frankness had kept this secret all the time. Suddenly a new thought struck her. Michael, not Pitty Pat, was the heir, the viscount. And quick upon this came another—the memory of the afternoon when Pitty Pat was five hours

old and Pat had been allowed to sit beside her. "What shall we call him?" she had asked. "What name would you choose?"

"We have no choice," Pat had answered, "no choice at all, beloved. The eldest son of the Earl of Glamoran brings his name with him—that young person in the next room is Patrick Gresham, Viscount Glendaire." She could remember the pride and love with which he spoke and the pride and love with which she listened to him. Yet all the time—oh, it would not bear thinking of. She turned and went back to the house. In the hall the red-shaded lamps had been lighted. Everything was peaceful, orderly and dignified and the butler, bearing a decanter of whiskey and a glass on a silver tray, was knocking at the door of the oak room. Sometimes a miserable mind will seize upon some irrelevant thought, and Dot wondered dully whether some belated tenant were closeted with John. Young Burke, she knew, never drank, and Pat had told her of the physician's decree that, for John, alcohol was fatal; intoxication, suicide. The butler waited. John admitted him, and Dorothy saw that her brother-in-law was alone.

She spent her first sleepless night in her husband's empty room.

CHAPTER XLI

MRS. FORBES had never enjoyed anything so much as this visit to her distinguished relatives, the Earl and Countess of Glamoran and their son, Viscount Glendaire. It was thus that she always thought of them, never in the familiar terms of Dot and Pat and Pitty Pat. The stateliness of life at Glendaire delighted her. She dressed indefatigably, took quite enthusiastically to the services of the maid allotted to her and generally proved to herself and to her husband that she was a Palmer.

"It's great!" John Forbes would enthusiastically remark. "That Palmer blood is great."

She conceived an admiring friendship for Mrs. O'Leary, that master-mind which could, and did, grapple with the intricacies of the domestic economy of so large a house.

Mrs. O'Leary reciprocated this admiration, and the two matrons spent many happy hours in the exchange of household hints and recipes. Mrs. Forbes never tired of expatiating upon the merits of The House at Edgecombe, and she drew up

amazing plans for its development and extension. Her other delights were the wearing of her elaborate costumes, shopping expeditions to Dublin, the society of Pitty Pat and the entertainment of numerous guests whom chance and etiquette brought to Glendaire. Hospitality had always been her talent and The House had never offered her such opportunities for its exercise as she found in Ireland.

She was so happy in all these innocent diversions that her husband, both for her own sake and for Dot's, affected to think lightly of the tragedy which ended Pitty Pat's birthday celebration.

"You see, Anne," he explained to her the next morning—"you see, we don't rightly understand this thing, and we've just got to wait until Pat comes home and explains it. I don't altogether trust that John Gresham. I don't know just what his game is, but I do know he's got a game of some kind. If he tries to talk to you about this kid, you just turn him over to me, will you?"

"Why, of course I will, but I guess I won't have to. He hasn't said more than six words to me since I came, and he's not likely to get talkative all at once. Of course it's uncharitable to hate a fellow-creature—especially a sick one—but I do feel as though I could hate John Gresham."

"Yes," answered her husband. "Yes, it does seem as though he took a sort of advantage of us by being an epileptic. You can't treat him as you would an ordinary man. If you do, he can always shut you up by throwing a fit. That sort of puts you in the wrong. It's unanswerable; you can't argue with him after that."

"I should say not; if he did it to me, I'd get a fit too."

"Well," said her husband, "I guess we're agreed about him. Now I want to talk to you about Dot. Don't you think it would be better for us not to bother her about this? You see, it ain't as though we could help her. We don't know the first thing about it. Now if you and I seem as though we didn't attach much importance to it, don't you think that might help her to feel a little the same way?"

"Perhaps so," said Mrs. Forbes reluctantly. She had been looking forward to a nice, tearful, heroic morning with Dot. She had prepared several maxims and several widely varying opinions to share her with daughter, and this proposition put that out of the question.

"Of course, you're right," she acquiesced; "we don't know anything. Yet a woman's sympathy, John——"

"I know, dearie, I know," said her husband, "there's nothing like it in the world. Your sympathy has been my strength lots and lots of times, but what Dot needs is bracing. You will be guided by me, won't you, dear? and promise not to talk to her about it unless she begins. She said last night that she was sorry it should have happened now and spoiled your visit. What you want to do is to show her that your visit ain't spoiled. The poor child has worries enough without worrying about us. You think it over and see if I ain't right."

"I know you are," she answered, "without any thinking at all."

The morning gave her every opportunity to follow her husband's advice. Dorothy breakfasted—or pretended to breakfast—in her own room and when, later in the morning, her mother found her in the nursery they met in the restraining presence of servants. Little Michael was already upon terms of intimacy with every one, and though he occasionally set out in search of his grandmother, his conduct under the circumstances was admirable. Dorothy had sought the children with some faint hope that the daylight might show the likeness between them to be less marked, but it was even more unmistakable than

had been at first apparent. She watched them playing together. She listened to the marvelling of Pitty Pat's unsuspicious American nurse, a consistent democrat who, scorning titles, still addressed her as Miss Dorothy. She was naturally puzzled by her new charge, but she accepted him without question or suspicion. "I am sure, Miss Dorothy," said she now, "that it's a very good idea to have a companion for Pitty Pat. Are you thinking of adopting him permanently?"

"Yes," answered Dorothy, "I am thinking of it."

She thought of nothing else. She wandered out in the garden and back to luncheon in a maze of unhappiness, loneliness and misery.

Once, long ages ago, she had told Pat that she was ready to face the cruelty of the world, and he had laughed and assured her that she would find the world always kind. She had come to believe in that old prophecy of his and yet she had always held herself ready to pay for her happy youth with a sorrowful maturity. But she had never supposed that sorrow could be like this. She had imagined it as at its worst, the loss by death of some one she loved: at its least, the loss of health or money. But always she had thought of it as something to be borne proudly and openly before all men. She had never bargained to bear shame.

There was nothing in her philosophy, her religion or her experience which could help her now. Even her father, her wise, old, patient daddy, could do nothing to lessen her torment. And her husband, her chivalrous, adoring and adored Pat, would be even more helpless to comfort her. She had received a letter from him that morning—a letter so like his cheery, confident, loving self that it had increased her misery a thousand-fold.

"I'll never leave you again," he had written, "especially I'll never stay with the mater without you again. She devotes all her time to convincing me that I'm not half good enough for you. I agree with her entirely, but I know your blessed eyes will never see it, so what difference can it make?

"I'm not sure when I shall be able to get back. Soon, I hope, for I tell you that without you and without James I am like a lost soul. Funny, wasn't it, his practically refusing to come with me. It was all nonsense his having rheumatism and inducing me to take Thomas on that account. He was up to some dodge of his own. I wonder what it was?"

Dot at the time had wondered too, but now there was no room in her mind for anything but unhappiness. She wandered back to the house and

presided at the luncheon hour. John Gresham had not left his room, and the other three, the Forbeses and Jarvis Burke, did their devoted best to seem placid and normal. Jarvis Burke and Mrs. Forbes had understood one another from the first. She was quite accustomed to comfort helpless admirers of her daughter's, and she easily recognised Jarvis as one of these. He had constituted himself as her particular guide and knight, and as he was well versed in all the lore and fable of the neighbourhood, she could not have had a better companion for her drives and walks.

"This afternoon," said he, "we'll go, if you would care to, to the Fairies' Pool. It isn't a very long walk and I know you'll be interested in it. It's the prettiest spot! Its only drawback is its notoriety. People come from far and near to see it. There is nothing to be said against that, but I do object to their throwing sandwiches and biscuit boxes into it. However the tourist season is nearly over and we might be able to catch it at a quiet moment."

"Of course I'll go," cried Mrs. Forbes. "Dorothy, dear," she went on, turning to the silent figure at the head of the table, "do you think you'd care to come with us?" Dorothy looked at her

blankly; the conversation, maintained entirely for her benefit, had not reached her.

"Her ladyship," said Jarvis, "has been there often. I fear she wouldn't care for it again." And Dorothy turned grateful eyes upon him.

"If you don't mind," she acquiesced, "I think I'll stay at home."

So Mrs. Forbes and her cavalier set off for the Fairies' Pool, and Dorothy and her father were left alone at the castle. John Gresham remained invisible and Forbes was grateful to whatever held him. But he was not grateful—but rather the reverse—to a frightened little Frenchman, John's long-suffering valet, who, in the middle of the afternoon, demanded speech with him.

The man lived in a state of vague terror. Forbes had often noticed that and had laughed about it with Pat. But to-day his terror was sharp, insistent. He demanded a physician. He would himself send for one except that he was authorised to do so only upon certain conditions. These conditions did not then obtain, but a state of things as bad, even worse, existed and somebody in authority must send for a physician for his master.

"It will be that he will, being better, kill me," remarked the little man resignedly. "He will kill me that I have told you."

"But you haven't told me anything," Forbes pointed out.

Ah, well, monsieur was to understand that he, Pierre, would no longer be responsible. Since dinner on the night preceding, Monsieur Gresham had eaten nothing and had drunk of whiskey three quarts.

"Three quarts!" repeated Forbes.

Ah, yes, Pierre agreed. Monsieur was no doubt surprised. He himself was also surprised. If monsieur wanted confirmation of those words he need only apply to the butler. The butler, being produced, corroborated these statistics, and further contributed the information that Mr. John, save for a glass of claret at dinner time, had never been known to touch anything at all. The physician's orders, so the butler had always understood, had been strictly non-alcoholic.

"And now," said Forbes, "he's drunk three quarts in eighteen hours. He's doing pretty well for a beginner. What sort of shape is he in?" he demanded of the flustered Pierre, who, having painfully arrived at an understanding of the question, broke out:

But that was of all things the most extraordinary, alarming. Monsieur Gresham was as he had always been. Oh, yes! he was silent, but

then, when was he not silent save when he was cursing? He could still curse. On that point Pierre had within the hour been reassured. Also he could walk. He had gone three times out upon the little balcony from which he could survey the so beautiful park and country. It was this which most alarmed Pierre. This calm! In convulsions, in unconsciousness, Pierre knew what to do. Oh, yes, there were the straps upon the bed, there was the little needle and the morphine, but this—this was something different—beyond reach of straps and morphine—beyond the experience of Pierre. A doctor must be called.

"Who had we better send for?" said Forbes to the butler. "You know their names, I suppose."

"You'd better send," was the butler's opinion, "for the one you have a grudge against, or one that's old enough to die, for it's my opinion—and I have known Mr. John for a good while—that he'll kill any one that goes near him. There's nothing to do but to give him all the drink he wants until it takes some sort of effect upon him. Then, when he's unconscious, some one can go near him."

"I'll go up and take a look at him myself," decided Forbes. "In Lord Gresham's absence I suppose it's up to me to keep an eye on things. Don't let her ladyship hear anything about this,"

he warned the man. "We can get along without bothering her."

The men withdrew and Forbes went in search of his daughter. "It's a lucky thing," he reflected, as he saw her guarding Pitty Pat while that philanthropist fed the swans on the lake at the bottom of the terrace, "it's a lucky thing that I'm here."

CHAPTER XLII

FORBES strolled down to join his daughter and her son. He intended to discuss John Gresham with her in terms both general and vague, and to draw from her such information as she possessed as to his disease. Pitty Pat greeted him rapturously and perched, clammy but happy, upon his shoulder. Dot greeted him more quietly but not less gladly, and again he reflected that Glendaire was a good place at which to be at that particular juncture. Dorothy was easily led to tell him all she knew of John's malady and its history.

"I'm a little worried about him," she ended, "because, last night, I saw Maloney carrying whiskey to his room; he is strictly forbidden to drink. I wish so much," she sighed, "that Pat were here. Pat is the only one who can manage him at all."

"Oh! he'll be back in a day or two," said Forbes genially. "I guess we can get along till then."

"I am afraid it must seem a little bit dull to you," said Dot gently. "I wish there were more for you to do."

"But there's lots," Forbes assured her—"lots. I'm busy all the time learning things. I'm learning leisure and how to be a member of the aristocracy and little frills of that sort. And I'll tell you a secret, daughter, if you'll promise not to laugh."

Dot promised, and her face as she did so nearly broke his heart. Nevertheless he went on.

"I'm taking up a new accomplishment. I picked out a good strong groom and he picked out a good strong horse, and about five o'clock every morning, while all the rest of you are asleep, or ought to be, I take a lesson in horseback riding. Of course in a way it's a toss up whether the groom or the horse or your daddy will come out ahead, but we're all strong, and I hope we'll live through it. But you can think I get enough exercise in the morning to last me through the day, and that I don't hanker after anything very exciting. No, daughter, dear, don't you fret; I'm having the time of my life and I know mother's having the time of her life, too. We'll let her do a little bit of entertaining when Pat gets back, and that will fix her right up. Jerusalem!" he ended, "what's happening?"

Dorothy turned with him and beheld the transformation of her quiet, brooding Elizabethan home

into a picnic ground. Tourists broke out like a rash upon the driveway. They surged through the open door, they swirled round corners and they called to one another in shrill admiration of everything within their range of vision; jaunting cars, brakes, landaus and waggonettes drove up and deposited further contributions to the noise, to the confusion and to the amazement of Dorothy and her father.

"What can it be?" they marvelled, and then as they descried the figure of Mrs. Forbes, animated, executive, and—as they discerned even from that distance—in a paroxysm of hospitality, Forbes understood.

"It's mother," he laughed. "By the blessed gum tree, it's mother entertaining! I'd know that reception-committee walk of hers a mile away. But say, daughter, this is going to spoil her for Edgecombe. I never could provide such a chunk of company as she's got now."

"But where did she get them?" marvelled Dot. "And what are they?"

"Company," her father answered. "That's enough for mother. Ah! here comes Burke. He'll be able to tell us what it's all about."

Forbes's surmise had been correct. The figures which hurried from point to point of interest were

indeed guests. Mrs. Forbes had met them at the Fairies' Pool. They were American ladies, that was all Burke knew, and Mrs. Forbes had invited them to the castle.

"But she can't know them all," expostulated Dot. "How many of them are there?"

"About fifty," Burke answered. "They are a verse or a chapter or something; I can't quite catch of what."

"What did I tell you, daughter?" demanded Forbes. "You see, it's just as I said. Mother has broken out again, and she's entertaining a travelling chapter of one of her societies. Do they look," he questioned Burke, "like Daughters of the Revolution?"

"They do not," laughed that young iconoclast. "They look more like its mothers and grandmothers."

"Then it's the Pilgrim Mothers," Forbes decided. "We have had them at our house," he explained to Jarvis, "by ones and twos. But fifty! Well, I guess this is just about the happiest day mother ever had. We'd better go up and help her, daughter."

"I was to request you to do so," said Burke; "and most especially I was to ask you to bring her grandson, the Viscount Glendaire."

"All right," said Forbes genially. "We'll go. Mother must have her viscount to show off; and, by George, honeybunch, you're a countess, I quite forgot that. Just think what an afternoon she has ahead of her! Fifty times she will be able to say, 'My daughter, the Countess of Glamoran, and my grandson, Viscount Glendaire.' We'd better have some cracked ice ready to put on her head when it's all over. But maybe it will keep her steady to have to say, 'My husband, *Mister* Forbes!' "

Forbes's surmise had been correct. Never had his wife been so illuminated with pride as she was that afternoon, and Mrs. O'Leary, so long cut off from the open-handed hospitality of the old earl's time, was no less delighted. She had often descanted upon her power to meet unexpected demands for provender, and now she had an opportunity of proving it. Half an hour after the arrival of the first detachment of the chapter of the Daughters of the Revolution, an elaborate collation was served in a marquee which had meanwhile sprung up upon the lawn near the prophetic yew. Forbes, Jarvis Burke, Pitty Pat and the countess did all that could be expected of them, and the sounds of revelry were so loud and shrill that they penetrated even John Gresham's gloom,

and brought that lowering personage upon the scene. But the Daughters, having a live countess and viscount to talk to, wasted scant time and courtesy upon a mere honourable, and the courtesy which he bestowed on them was even scantier.

"You see," said he, drawing Burke aside, "what I told you was quite true. These are "The Vulgarian's" people. She'll grow like them in a few years."

"She could do very much worse," said Jarvis stoutly. "Some of these strangers are charming. It's only a very small minority that's making all the noise."

"Oh, well," said Gresham. "You're prejudiced, of course."

"We both are," retorted Jarvis.

Mr. Forbes detached himself from his compatriots and crossed to the other two men. He had been watching Gresham closely, and he could see no difference in his manner or bearing. At first Forbes had dreaded some outbreak, but John was as cool and as disagreeable as ever. It was impossible, thought the older man, that the servants had told the truth, and yet when John presently left them and went into the house, Jarvis turned to the older man with the same story.

"He's gone to get a drink," said he. "He's on the fourth quart since last night. Did you ever see anything like the way he stands it? Not a thing to eat, mind you, not as much as a piece of toast. I wish his lordship was here."

"Well," said Forbes, "I think it's about time he was here." Being a man of action he presently strolled down to the village and sent a telegram to London. The youth who presided over the telegraph office, which was also the post-office, the bakery and the stationer's, was of a furtive eye and a nervous manner. Forbes had noticed these characteristics before. When he had read the telegram, he seemed to the observant Forbes to grow yet more furtive and more nervous.

"Anything the matter with it?" Forbes asked.

"No! Oh, no!" answered the youth.

"Then see that you send it, and have it marked 'rush'!" Forbes commanded. But when he returned to the squalid village street he looked very thoughtful.

"I don't like that boy's eye," he decided, as he listened in vain for the click of the transmitter. "I certainly don't like his eye."

Still thoughtful he mounted the hill and went in search of his friend the big groom.

"Put a horse to the dog-cart," he commanded.

"I'm going to take her ladyship for a little turn."

"But why?" asked Dot, when he told her to make ready. She had set her heart on a quiet hour in a darkened room. For to entertain and to bid farewell to fifty voluble strangers had been a severe tax upon her unhappiness.

"Because you're tired, honeybunch; it will do you good. You know you always went riding with daddy when he went on business, and I'm going on business now."

Dorothy abandoned the rest cure and sent for her driving coat and a hat, and as her father's companionship lightened her sorrow she reflected that his business could not have been very urgent or absorbing, for they meandered among lanes and hedgerows until they came to the nearest little town. They drew up in front of another combination of post-office, sweet-shop, telegraph office and butcher's.

"Mother is all out of illustrated post-cards," said Forbes casually. "You don't mind holding the horse a minute while I go in and buy her some. They've got great ones in this store."

At about the time that the Earl of Glamoran in London was thinking of going home to his mother's flat to dress for dinner, the furtive-eyed

young man from Ballycreel post-office was shown into the oak room at Glendaire.

"I was to show you, sir," said he to "the master," "any telegram from the castle before I sent it on to Dublin. Her ladyship's father is after giving me this," and he laid Forbes's clearly written message upon the table. "Will I be sendin' it?"

"Come home—Forbes," was all it said. Under the circumstances it seemed enough, and even too much, to Gresham. He tore the telegraph form into small pieces, and then dropped them into the fire.

"Then I'm *not* to send it, sir?" asked the furtive boy. He was good at deductions.

"Send this instead," said John: and he wrote: "All well and happy here." Unfortunately, however, for the plans of that gentleman, Forbes had taken the precaution to repeat his message from the post-office and telegraph station in which he had bought his wife's post-cards. He had, as he had said to himself, disliked the eye of the furtive boy.

Pat was out when the telegrams arrived and Mrs. Fortescue, whose hip did not in the least interfere with her healthy interest in other people's affairs, opened both of them. She pondered over

them for a long time and then undid the good she had unconsciously performed. For when Pat came in she gave him Forbes's telegram and her blessing.

"I cannot make it to-night," said Pat; "it's too late now, but I'll be with them before to-morrow evening."

CHAPTER XLIII

THE next day broke dark and lowering over Glendaire. Mrs. Forbes, cheered by yesterday's triumph of hospitality, persisted in regarding the dreary downpour as "the clearing shower" for which she had been watching ever since her arrival in Ireland. It made all plans for the day impossible, but every one in the household, save only Mrs. Forbes, was too unhappy to care much what the weather might be. Dorothy was not growing in the least resigned to her heartbreak, and Forbes was still silently but desperately worried.

John, still on his diet of whiskey, supplemented now by morphine, would have been a dangerous member of any household. Jarvis Burke was miserable because his liege lady was so. He felt that John was responsible and hated and watched him accordingly. It was he who warned Forbes of the morphine. "The medico from Dublin gave it to him," he explained. "He seemed so sensible and so unlikely to contract the habit that he trusted him with the whole kit: syringe, tablets and all.

Mr. Gresham has had them for years. He's been able several times to ward off attacks when he felt premonitory symptoms. But now he's taking it outrageously. Pierre says he's had five or six injections since last night. And still nothing but that abominable whiskey. Now, if he discovers that we suspect what he's doing, he will know, of course, that Pierre has been blabbing, and I honestly believe, Mr. Forbes, that he would kill the poor fool."

"He's an agreeable sort of a young man, ain't he?" Forbes commented.

"I firmly believe," answered Jarvis, "that he's going mad. He always used to have his times of insanity and violence, but he was in the main an awfully decent sort of chap, except of course with the tenants; he's always been abominable with them. But he's terribly changed," he went on, with some embarrassment, "ever since his lordship's marriage. That made a great difference in his position."

"It would," Forbes agreed. "I see that, of course."

"Well, now," asked Burke, "what do you think we ought to do?"

"Wait till his lordship comes home."

"But when is he coming?"

"Soon," answered Forbes critically, "or I miss my guess. Say," he added, "I don't mind telling you, but I telegraphed to him last night

"From Ballycreel?" asked Jarvis.

"Yes," said Forbes, "first from Ballycreel. But somehow I didn't like that boy's eye and so, later on, I repeated the telegram from Dunboggan."

"Oh! I am glad you did that," said Burke. "I think I may say without disloyalty that it's just as well that you repeated it from Dunboggan."

"I like your spirit," said Forbes. "Oh! you don't need to tell me anything. I just happened not to like that boy's eye, that's all."

"That's all, of course," Jarvis agreed.

It so chanced that the boy whose eye Forbes did not like was even then closeted in the oak room with John Gresham.

"I am afraid I disturb your honour," said he, when John turned his ghastly face upon him, "but a telegram has just come for her ladyship's father. I kem up to ask ye, would I send it to him? It says, 'Meet 8.52 to-night—Glamoran.'"

"What," demanded John—"what did you say, you villain?"

"Glory be to God, sir," protested the furtive

youth, "I said nothing at all but what kem out of the wire. Shure! how could *I* help it? You tould me to bring ye all the messages what kem for the castle before I'd give them to any one else."

"Then listen to me, Tim; you are to forget that this ever came, that you ever heard of it. You're to deny that you were in the office when they sent it out from Dublin. If you ever admit that you received this and gave it to me, I'll blow your foolish head off your worthless body. Now go."

Tim required no second bidding; and John, left face to face with this last and worst catastrophe, drank half a tumblerful of raw whiskey and tried to bring a collected mind to bear upon it. One thing was clear, Pat had already left London. It was impossible to stop him, it was equally impossible to let him come home to meet Dot's reproaches and a new four-year-old son. To get the boy away; that was the first thing to do; to get him away and then to persuade Dot—he cursed himself now for not having gained more of her confidence and friendship—that her only dignified, effectual course would be to assume ignorance of Michael's existence until Pat should have himself confessed it to her. That might be managed; failing that, he could tell his brother

that Dot met Michael by accident, had instantly jumped to the incredibly wrong conclusion, and that John had left her unenlightened thinking that a little lesson in the wifely duty of faith would do her good. But first there was the child to be got rid of. John again fortified himself from the decanter, and set out for the nursery. He would easily invent messages upon which to despatch the two nurses, and then he could remove the child.

The nurseries were separated from the rest of the house by a green baize door. Gresham stood at it and called the American nurse to him. He despatched her to Mrs. O'Leary. When she was quite out of hearing he called the other woman and sent her to his own apartments with a message to Pierre. Then he passed through the baize door and closed it softly. From the big day nursery where he and Pat had played together, he heard the laughter and the hurried feet of Pitty Pat and Michael. Softly he approached the open door and, with a carefully seductive smile, went in. The two boys stopped instantly and stared at him. Pluto, asleep upon the hearth-rug, opened a red-rimmed eye and wagged a lazy tail. Then detecting storm signals, he discreetly withdrew under a sofa, and a figure near the window rose and stood at attention.

"What can we do for you, sir?" said James, alert, respectful and ironical. "It isn't often that you honour this part of the house."

"Why aren't you in London with your master?" snapped John.

"His lordship has quite given me up, sir, in favour of Thomas, quite 'anded me over, as it were, to his little lordship. I spends my time taking care of *'im* now."

"Well!" said John, "you may go on taking care of his little lordship. My business is with the other boy. I want him down in the oak room for a few moments. Come here, Michael."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said James, interposing his quiet person between John and the two children, "but her ladyship's orders are that Michael is to stay in the nurseries. 'E's quite 'appy 'ere, as you see. I am sorry to disoblige you, sir, but he can't go with you. Unless," he suggested hopefully, "you was to call her ladyship up to change her orders."

"It's not important enough for that," said John, as he turned away. And though he had in his own person proved the harmlessness of curses he yet most thoroughly cursed the faithful James as he went down-stairs again.

CHAPTER XLIV

ARRIVED in the oak room he set about polishing and examining his guns. A dull flame of madness was burning in him, and he fed it from time to time from decanter and syringe; and yet to all appearances he was the ordinary John Gresham of ordinary days. As he worked among his guns a half-crazy plot outlined itself before him. He selected a fowling-piece and proceeded to load cartridges for it. Five he loaded with ordinary bird shot but for the sixth he used heavy buck-shot and marked its paper wad with a cross. Then he loaded six more with bird shot and he had nearly finished when the door opened and Jarvis Burke came in.

"The gamekeeper reports a scourge of stoats," John told Jarvis. "He and I are going out together toward evening to see if we can get a few of them."

"Good sport; I think I'll go, too."

"That would be charming, but I am afraid we can't manage it. Three would be rather too many."

"But you needn't bother to load shells," said Jarvis. "There are a lot of them in the gun-room. By the way, what number are they?" he asked with apparent unconcern, crossing to the table where John had arranged them and taking up one. "'Twelves,' yes; I loaded some 'twelves' only last week."

Just before luncheon he found the oak room unoccupied and slipping in he abstracted the marked shell and substituted one similarly marked which he had ready in his pocket. He then went to the gun-room, locked the door and unloaded John's cartridges. "Buck-shot," he exclaimed, when the nine heavy shot lay in his hand. "Buck-shot, as I'm a living sinner, and he tells me it's for stoats. Now, whether he means suicide or murder it's hard to say; but in either case, it will do no harm to spike his guns. If he weren't so confoundedly sharp, I'd give him a blank, but he'd notice the difference in weight. I'll just get him up a snipe-shot shell, mark it as he has marked this one and let him take pot shots with that."

Jarvis, later in the afternoon, found reason to congratulate himself upon his little interference. He was playing billiards with Mr. Forbes when Maloney came to say that Mr. Gresham wanted him. The day was still dour and glowering.

Dorothy was in the nursery, Mrs. Forbes was with Mrs. O'Leary in the still-room. Every one was imprisoned by the "clearing shower" which was still falling doggedly. And Jarvis hoped that John would abandon his intent upon the stoats together with the more sinister and mysterious purpose for which he had intended the buck-shot. To his disappointment, however, he found his employer in heavy outing attire and a most execrable frame of mind.

Whiskey and morphine, desperation, panic and insanity make a tragic blend. He locked the door as soon as Jarvis entered, put the key in his pocket and took up his gun. Jarvis thought with thanksgiving of the abstracted buck-shot and wondered if his own was the life he had saved.

"You will stay here," said John, "until I come back. If any one knocks at the door tell them I am here but too busy to be disturbed. Tell them if you like," said he, with a sardonic grin as he drank another half-tumbler of whiskey, "that I'm drunk, asleep, dead, anything you please except that I'm not here. You won't let anybody in because I have locked the door and I shall take the key with me. Now go over to that bookcase and look at the books in it for three minutes. Never mind what you hear. Do what I tell you

and you will be safe, but turn around before the three minutes are up—you have your watch—and I won't answer for the consequences."

To turn his back upon his employer seemed to Jarvis the acme of recklessness, but since he was unarmed, trapped and locked in with a maniac he realised that his only hope lay in keeping that maniac as nearly calm as might be. He therefore obeyed instructions with an assumption of cool courage and at the end of three minutes he turned back to the room and found himself alone. He had heard a grating sound like the opening and closing of a drawer.

"This," said he, as he looked about the empty room and contemplated his position—"this is no place for a nervous man. It would be deucedly exciting and spectacular if one were not living in it. As an entertainment it might do. As an experience it's a little creepy. The whole thing is getting beyond me and I don't see how his lordship's return will benefit us even if we live to see him."

He then fell to thinking of the countess. How changed she was since the advent of that mysterious child—how changed, yet still how lovely! Realising her need of help and his helplessness he echoed Mr. Forbes's satisfaction. It was indeed

most fortunate that that capable, shrewd and kindly presence was near her. If only he could have informed that astute visitor of John's latest escapade! If only he could escape from this luxurious prison chamber! He was torn by anxiety: vague and therefore harder to bear than any definite foreboding. He knew that, partly through his disregard of warnings and partly through his innate dread of making scenes, a maniac armed and unguarded was at large in an unsuspecting little community. He chafed and rebelled against his imprisonment and made ceaseless efforts, sometimes calm and reasoned, sometimes desperate and haphazard, to find the secret exit through which John Gresham had disappeared. Once or twice before he had suspected the existence of some secret channel of communication with the outside world. Now he was sure of it, but the high oak wainscotting and the two heavy bookcases resisted all his investigations and left him angry, hot and thwarted.

The dreary day was drawing to its dark close and Jarvis had decided that on the expiration of another ten minutes he would make his escape by blowing open the door with a decoy cartridge he still had in his pocket. He realised that he might pass through the door straight to paradise but he

was nearly desperate. The old room which had been built to be impregnable in the year 1490 was impregnable still.

Its windows were slits through which even Jarvis's slim body could not pass. Also they were high up in the wall, far beyond reach. Jarvis was as safely trapped as though he were in the Bastile.

He could not doubt that Gresham was abroad upon some evil purpose. It seemed equally probable that he intended to involve Jarvis in his villainy. It was better to chance the gunpowder than to endure that. He abstracted the shot from the cartridge, unscrewed the heavy door knob, and was trying to force the cartridge into the aperture, when he heard the grating sound again and turned to find John Gresham beside the table. He was now absolutely and openly mad. Jarvis had read and heard of hair-raising terror. He experienced it now, and as the two men faced one another, white, tense and ghastly, the whole world seemed to wait and listen for the next act in the tragedy of the oak room. There was murder in the air. But the world did not wait long. There were cries and the sound of heavy feet upon the avenue. There were answering cries and hurrying feet within the castle. Then John Gresham moved, but not toward Jarvis; he reached for the

decanter, poured out a tumberful of raw whiskey and swallowed it.

"Curse them!" he snarled and drank again. "Go out," he commanded, putting the key in its place and unlocking the door.

"What have you done?" whispered Burke. "Where have you been?"

"I've done nothing," Gresham said. "I've never left this room. You know it. You'll swear it or by God you'll never know or swear anything again on this side of eternity."

Even while he was talking he was removing from his person all traces of his outing. He slipped out of his boots and puttees. Under them he had worn golf stockings and when he had changed his coat and put on a pair of patent-leather pumps he was in his ordinary afternoon dress.

Meanwhile the commotion outside was growing momentarily louder and Jarvis, coming out of the darkened oak room, was almost blinded by the glare of electric lights. The whole household was gathered in the hall or on the steps. Jarvis joined the countess at the open door.

"Where have you been, boy?" asked Forbes. "There's been an accident. John Gresham is reported to be wounded or killed. They are bringing him home on a stretcher. It's hard to

understand from these fellows just what has happened. Murder, I think," he added, dropping his voice.

"God help us all, sir; I'm afraid it is," said Mrs. O'Leary. "You know, Mr. Burke, how he's hated."

" 'Twill be McGurk that done it," one of the footmen broke out. "He was sayin' he would this great while back."

"They are coming now," cried Dorothy. "I see men carrying something down there among the beeches. Oh! poor fellow! I'll go and telephone to the village. Dr. Maguire can get here nearly as soon as they do."

When she returned from the library the men had set their improvised litter upon the floor in the hall and the servants had gathered about the insensible figure. All John's iniquities were forgiven now, and tears softened many an eye which had scowled only that morning upon "the master." Forbes was making an amateur investigation of his injuries; Jarvis was looking on and feeling that the whole world was falling down—John Gresham's appearances and disappearances were too much for him. Three minutes ago he had been furiously alive. Now he was apparently dead. In three minutes!

You had better go up-stairs with mother," said Forbes as his daughter approached. "The poor fellow's face is shot up considerable and he's not what you would call pleasing to look at."

But Dorothy, in her hunting expeditions and her travels, had seen many accidents and had learned from her husband a few rules of soldierly first aid. She therefore disregarded her father's warning and stepped into the place the servants made for her. Then the hall, the whole house, echoed to her cry:

"It's Pat! Oh! God, it's Pat. Fools," she stormed, turning on her people, "don't you know your lord?" And as she gathered the disfigured head to her breast the door of the oak room opened and John Gresham stepped out.

CHAPTER XLV

HALF an hour later the village doctor came out of the Earl of Glamoran's room and descended to the hall where Mr. and Mrs. Forbes were waiting to hear his verdict.

"I have done all that can be done just now and without special instruments. Ah! Mr. Gresham," he added, as John came up to them, "I was just about to say that you must send to Dublin for McBirney. The case is entirely beyond me. If you will allow me to use your telephone I can describe the injury to him. He will have to bring a nurse and an assistant with him. The operation ought to be performed immediately."

"McBirney? Operation?" John repeated. "But McBirney is an eye man."

"Precisely. The injury is to the eyes."

"And there is danger, doctor?" questioned Mrs. Forbes.

"Of death, no; of blindness, yes. He received a charge of snipe shot full in the face."

"Snipe shot?" repeated John. He seemed incapable of an original remark.

"Yes, snipe shot. If it had been anything larger you wouldn't have required my services. But I've done all I can. Precious little! I haven't even been able to keep her ladyship from suspecting the gravity of the wounds. She never left us, and I must say that for a lady of her rank and position she was wonderfully useful and sensible: no whining, no tears."

"The telephone," said John, "is in the library; will you come with me?"

"Now, mother," remonstrated Mr. Forbes, when he was left alone with his wife, "you've got to brace up and come out strong. This is a sort of trouble that every one can help in."

"But I don't understand it," she persisted.

"Nobody understands it," said Forbes; "as far as we've got in putting things together it seems that Pat arrived unexpectedly at the station, found no one there to meet him, got a jarvey to drive him up and that some one shot at him from behind a hedge. It's the general impression that he was mistaken for John. Lots of the people round here have been 'hiding something from him' for a long time, and the likeness which deceived all of us except Dorothy deceived this would-be murderer. The horse bolted at the sound of the shot, threw out Pat and the driver,

smashed the shafts and everything else he could reach with his heels, and then ran away. The driver was not much hurt. He called to some men working in a field and they brought Pat home, thinking, of course, that he was John. But John, according to himself, and according to young Jarvis here, was busy in the oak room all afternoon. I suppose we'll never find out who really did the shooting. Everybody will know, but nobody will tell; that's one of the little traits that make the Irish so hard to govern."

John and the doctor came back at this point and the doctor corroborated Forbes's statement. "Nothing is more unlikely," said he, "than that you'll ever find out who did it, unless some one turns crown's witness."

John Gresham turned to Jarvis but could not catch his eyes. Jarvis's face was not encouraging.

"I'll take a pretty good try at it, anyway," said John Forbes grimly. "I don't propose to have my daughter widowed and my grandson orphaned and just sit down and do nothing about it."

"But it isn't quite so bad as that," the doctor broke in. "At least I suppose we may say it isn't, though personally I should prefer being dead

to being blind. It may not be even that if McBirney gets here in time. He promised to start immediately. You know his lordship is unconscious; that's one thing in our favour. He's quiet and I'm just going up to keep him so until McBirney arrives. If he begins to move his eyes about the whole thing will be up."

Left to themselves they gathered more closely about the fire, and waited with what self-command they might for the coming of the great man from Dublin. The rain and the wind were as wild as they had been all day, but the darkness without the house and the shadow of death within made them seem doubly remorseless.

John roamed through the house like a caged beast. He started at every sound, at every movement. Sometimes he went up to listen at Pat's door, sometimes he shut himself into his room and drank. But he always came back to Jarvis Burke and the Forbeses at the fireplace, and always he talked of the detection of the criminal. Despite all his resolves, all his sense of danger, he could not keep away from the topic. It was rather difficult for the others. He did not know that his brother was supposed to have been mistaken for himself, and no one cared to enlighten him.

The terrified servants were gradually restored

to some semblance of order and the household swung back into its accustomed round. There was a dinner at which little was eaten and less was said. Dr. Maguire, summoned to this meal, reported that things up-stairs were quite unchanged. Her ladyship was still beside her husband, and his lordship, though apparently unconscious from the effects of concussion, shock and drugs, seemed to know when she was near him and to miss her when she moved. Dr. Maguire ate hurriedly and heartily and went back to his patient.

Meanwhile Dorothy underwent progressive and heart-breaking torture as she looked at her husband's quiet body and disfigured face. Now that the bleeding was checked she could see the extent of his injuries. Only a few little pin pricks they seemed. Dr. Maguire had picked the shot out of those on the forehead and the left side of the face. But there were three little flecks of red in the left eyelid: one on the right. It was the only mark on the right side of the face, and it might mean so much. Dr. Maguire left these untouched.

"There is a chance," he told Dorothy, "that the bleeding may only be from the lids. Perhaps the eyes themselves are not seriously involved. We can only wait for McBirney."

And so she waited. There was nothing else to do except from time to time to wipe away the blood which welled slowly through the quiet lashes.

And this was the home-coming to which she had looked forward with such contradictory emotions. She had dreaded it and yet desired it. It would at least put an end to her uncertainty for, against all reason and all evidence, she had still doubted. She knew that her father had never trusted John, and sometimes she had been able to believe that somehow Pat would explain, would make things right again, would take away the load which lay upon her heart and made hope and happiness, almost life itself, impossible.

And now Pat had come home, and all these torments were little and insignificant beside the two great fears that he brought with him. She no longer asked herself whether he had deceived her, she almost no longer cared; other questions tortured her. Would he live? Would this horrible stillness ever pass away from his long slim body? Would he see? Was the light and the love forever gone out of his dear eyes? What difference did anything else make? And for the answer to these vital questions she must go, not to Pat, not to her father, but to a stranger, a man of whom

she had never heard until that night, a man who presently entered with Dr. Maguire, followed by a younger man carrying a hand-bag, and by a white-capped linen-clothed nurse. She was presently aware of those people expecting her to trust her husband's life to them. That they thought it quite in the nature of things that they should lay hands upon Pat's face and hair and fair dear body, and they expected that she, to whom he belonged, to whom his face and hair and body were the sacred manifestations of the divine power, should go away and leave them to do as they wished with him.

A wonderful thing is a good professional manner. Dr. McBirney had it. He brought it to bear upon Dorothy; and while she was still fiercely determining to stay with Pat at all costs and against all persuasions, she found herself out in the hall, heard the door locked behind her and, crouching against the wall, she smelled the sickeningly sweet smell of ether. It carried her irresistibly back to the night when Pitty Pat was born, and then it mercifully carried her quite away to unconsciousness. And it was Jarvis who found her face downward on the ground outside her husband's door. He picked her up and carried her down to the others at the fire, and there the Countess of Gla-

moran lay in her father's arms and cried like the little girl he had so often comforted at Edgecombe, while science did its work in the quiet room upstairs.

CHAPTER XLVI

PRESENTLY McBirney came down-stairs. Dorothy had stopped crying and John, looking like a nightmare of himself, came in to hear the great man's verdict. The great man had none to give. It was impossible at that juncture to predicate anything; they could only hope for the best and prepare for the worst.

"By the worst you mean—?" Dorothy questioned.

"Absolute blindness," he answered. "There is, however, every reason to hope that the right eye can be saved, but the left eye is more seriously threatened. I say we must hope for the best, and the best will be the complete restoration of both eyes and the happy avoidance of disfigurement."

"And when," asked Dorothy, "shall we know?"

"Certainly in not less than a week; perhaps not till the end of a fortnight. It depends somewhat upon his lordship's constitution and somewhat upon nursing and care. These, of course, he will have. But let me impress upon your ladyship that he must be kept absolutely calm; excitement

would undo everything. Let me also say that much depends upon you. You must conserve your own strength, energy and self-control. You will require them all. Have you had any dinner? I thought not! Well, have it now and then go up to him. He's asking for you. And, remember, no excitement; keep him calm and happy, and I verily believe we may count upon the best. My dear madam," he broke off, turning to Mrs. Forbes, "will you make yourself responsible for the physical well-being of your daughter? See that she eats and sleeps sensibly, takes a little air and exercise every day and does not fret unduly."

"I will," said Mrs. Forbes; "indeed I will," and forthwith set out upon her task by ringing for Maloney and conferring with him upon the immediate production of sandwiches and sherry. She afterward sought audience with Mrs. O'Leary, and sustained herself through the anxiety of the next few days by marvels of invalid cookery which she performed in the still-room under the admiring gaze of the still-room maids. She put Dorothy and Pat upon invalid diet. She would have treated Forbes in the same way had he not successfully resisted; and even John Gresham she once or twice persuaded to partake of chicken broth and toast. The madness was dying down in Gresham. He

had gone forth deliberately to kill his brother and now the thought that he had blinded him was torture. Nature had herself taken John's case in hand and his constitution had refused to accept any more whiskey. For a day or two he starved on water and morphine. Then Mrs. Forbes, finding the lion with his claws drawn and his strength gone, introduced the chicken broth and triumphed.

In all the hurry and excitement of those first few days, John took no part. Once or twice he was sent for to his brother's room but the sight of his own handiwork, the bandaged head and the great quiet body on the bed, rendered him almost speechless. Yet once, being alone with Pat and knowing that Michael's presence in the house could not long be kept secret from him, he had told his brother that the child was there. As much of Pat's face as was left visible by his bandages smiled and he reached blindly for his brother's hand. "It is as I should wish it," said he. "Didn't I tell you that I had married a wonderful woman?"

"But don't say anything to her about it," warned John; "they won't let me in again if they know I've told you. You are not supposed to be agitated."

"Nonsense!" said his brother, "I'm glad you've told me. She is the most marvellous woman in the world, John, and you say," he went on, "that she's going to bring him up with our boy? Well, he couldn't be in better hands."

"But you will say nothing to her yet awhile?" John urged.

"Very good," agreed his brother, "since you are so keen on it, I won't." And yet when John had left and Dorothy came back to him, he called her close to the bedside. "My darling," he whispered, "John has told me how nobly you behaved about——"

But Dorothy's hand was on his lips. "No, no," she cried and fell upon her knees beside him. "I wasn't noble nor good nor any of the things you think. I did it because I felt that I had to do it, but I hated it, hated it, hated it. I did it because I thought you would wish me to, but oh! Pat, why didn't you tell me instead of letting it come upon me as it did?"

"I always meant to," he made reply, "but somehow I put it off from day to day. We were so happy, sweetheart, and you were so true and bright that I didn't want even a shadow of that old grief to come near you. I'm sorry I ever went upon this cursed journey. If I had been here the

thing might never have happened. And yet, dear, I'm glad it did. I'm proud to think that your own heart led you to do a difficult and noble thing. You are a very good woman, Dorothy, my wife."

"No, no, I'm not," she protested, laying her head beside his on the pillow. "And now, dear, you must try to sleep; you mustn't be agitated, the doctors say."

"Oh! hang the doctors," was Pat's ungrateful answer. "If I ever get over that fool's shot, I shall owe my recovery to you, as I owe you everything else that makes life worth living."

But presently he did fall asleep, and Dot, afraid of disturbing him, crouched beside him with her head beside his head. All the doubts were over now, it was true. The worst was true. And he took it like this! Surely the accident must have affected his reason. He had been so unrepentant, had thought so lightly of the moral aspect of what he had done. Oh! it was clear enough that he loved her, that he was relieved to find her dutiful and complacent, but what manner of man was he, this husband of hers? Had he no conscience? She had expected humility, *mea culpa*, prayers for pardon. He had offered her none of these, had accepted her love and her caresses

without compunction, had disinherited her son without a word. Oh, *what* manner of man was he?

Pat, still asleep, turned toward her, threw an arm across her shoulder and snuggled his head into the hollow of her neck. For an instant she thought of casting him from her, of springing up and denouncing him, of forcing him to see the enormity of what he had done. Then she remembered the physician's warnings. She gathered Pat into her embrace and began to cry silently, quietly as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XLVII

"THIS waiting is the worst part of it," Mr. Forbes was saying to his wife. It was five days since Pat had been hurt, and Dr. McBirney at the close of his daily visit had promised a verdict for the next day. "And even after we know whether he is going to see or not, we shall still have the investigation into the attempt to murder him."

"That," said Jarvis Burke, who was walking with them to the stables where Forbes, having taken the last of his lessons that morning, and having bought an enormous charger in Dublin, was ready to electrify his wife, "will be a perfectly useless investigation. Five days gone and nothing done—they might as well give it up."

"They might indeed," Forbes answered; "they say they're waiting for the earl's evidence. Well, he has none to give. I asked him. He doesn't know as much about it as we do. The fellow will get clear away. His pals will deny everything: that he ever had a gun, that he knew how to shoot, that he had any arms, or legs, that he was out on that afternoon, that he was ever born—

anything that the case seems to require. Of all the perversions of truth of which humanity is capable, I think an accomplice in a crime like this is the most abominable." This speech and Mrs. Forbes's hearty concurrence in it were rather too much for Jarvis Burke, and he invented a forgotten appointment which called him back to the house.

"And then," Mrs. Forbes went on, "even after those things are cleared up, we still have the question of Michael. We have a wonderful daughter, John. I wonder what has made her so brave and calm?"

"Love," answered Forbes promptly.

"I have read about the triumph of love," his wife answered, "but I never saw it before. She loves Pat so much that she can believe in him in spite of everything."

"Of course she does; of course," said Forbes. "But I can imagine an even higher triumph of love. Supposing that she knew him to be guilty and yet loved him, wouldn't that be even nobler, dear?"

"Yes, I suppose it would. How lives differ! Everything has been calm and uncomplicated for me, and here's poor little Dot struggling with such awful uncertainties."

"She'll come through them, you'll see," cried Dot's father. "And now I want you to watch *my* struggle."

But Mr. Forbes's equestrian exhibition was doomed for that day. A footman hurried out through the yew walk to say that a lady and gentleman had called to see Mrs. Forbes.

"Some of the neighbours, I suppose, Thomas," said she, "coming to ask after his lordship."

Mrs. Forbes had enjoyed numerous interviews of this nature. They generally began in formal inquiries and ended in the intimacies of tea. But Thomas was of the respectful opinion that these were not neighbours—they were, if he might hazard an opinion, Americans. Their names they had disclosed as Petty—Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Petty. They had come with a small trunk; on a jaunting car; from Dunboggan. Thomas's manner, as he detailed this report, seemed to add that Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Petty might, without breaking his heart, return with their small trunk, on the jaunting car, to Dunboggan.

"Petty," cried Mrs. Forbes miserably. "Oh, John, The House is burned, and they've come to break it to us."

She flew to the great hall and there she found Abraham Petty resplendent, as of yore, of shirt

and cowlick, self-confident and awkward, in a triumph of embarrassment. By his side stood Mrs. Abraham Petty, née Rose Matilda Perkins, reflecting all her husband's emotion, save his assurance, and setting up a furious blush on her own account.

"What has happened?" demanded Mrs. Forbes, waiving all ceremony and greeting.

"We got married," answered Abraham.

"The House?" panted Mrs. Forbes.

"The House is doing fine," Abraham made reply. "We had peas and beans out of the garden right along until we left. Ma said I was to tell ye that she thinks Reuben Sands is selling your garden truck."

"And Mis' Petty," the bride began, "wanted I should tell you that the little window in the pink guest-room blew open in a thunder-storm the week before last and that the rain done a lot of damage to the wall-paper between the window and the floor. It ain't spread and it ain't run through: otherwise everything is just as you left it."

Mrs. Forbes allowed these soothing tidings to sink into her mind. They might not have been soothing under ordinary circumstances, but coming so quickly upon the holocaust which she had

imagined, an excess of enterprise on Reuben's part and one damaged breadth of wall-paper seemed happy tidings. Mr. Forbes was greeting his townspeople when his wife, having made these reflections, returned to the surface of things and she joined most heartily in his cordiality. The bride sank into silence. She, who in her glass case had once outrivalled the parrot, found herself struck dumb by the dignity of her position as Abraham Petty's wife. But Abraham suffered from no conversational disability. "It's our wedding tower," he explained largely. "We've had a real good year in business, and I says to Matilda we couldn't do no better than to run over and visit Mr. and Mrs. Forbes and Dot. The old gentleman that let us in says Dot's husband ain't well. I'm real sorry for that; he's quite a nice feller for an Englishman. But I guess his being sick won't make no real difference. I wouldn't have him know it for the world but we really came to visit you and Dot."

"That's very good of you," said Mrs. Forbes. "I'll just go and see if Dot can come down for a moment."

"Don't tell her who it is," suggested the facetious Abraham. "She'll be just tickled to death when she sees us. She don't know we're married, does she? They didn't telegraph it over here to

any of the papers, did they? I never thought of that before."

He was dissuaded from thinking of it then.

His marriage, he was assured, had wonderfully escaped the argus eye of the British press. Greatly relieved on this score, he allowed one of the footmen to take the small trunk up-stairs. Matilda followed it and Abraham, removing his coat and wiping his heated brow, sat down in a splendour of blinding shirt sleeves to talk to Mr. Forbes. He had taken the precaution to inform himself rather thoroughly upon Mr. Forbes's affairs at Edgecombe—not with any definite idea of rendering himself more welcome than his natural charms made him, but simply in pursuance of the principle that it was always well to be thoroughly informed upon whatever did not concern him. The more personal, embarrassing and secret the information, the greater its value in his eyes. In the present instance, however, his information was all favourable and reassuring. He was just describing the successful yield of the tobacco fields when Maloney passed through the hall. The ancient servitor stopped and stared. Never had he been called upon to deal with a guest who tried to undress in the hall. Abraham, growing excited, waved a pink and purple shirt sleeve and Maloney's eye grew hard. He

took up Abraham's coat from the chair upon which that careful traveller had laid it, and before Mr. Petty had quite realised what he was doing, he had allowed himself and his shirt sleeves to be enshrouded. He winked impressively at Forbes during the process and, when the scandalised Maloney withdrew, he said:

"Thinks I'll take cold, don't he? Some old gentlemen is awful fussy that way; might as well be old ladies. But who is he, anyway?"

"He's the butler."

"Oh, one of the help?"

"Yes, he waits on the table." And Abraham, when he later joined the overwhelmed Matilda in a room in which she was afraid to move and against whose impressive dignity he only supported himself by likening it to a museum, was able to entertain that flustered exile by humorous accounts of Dot's man waitress.

Dorothy had before that time emerged from Pat's room to welcome her guests, and she had wisely given orders that they should be left free of maid or valet. Maloney's eyebrows, when he received this order, seemed to say that it was an injudicious one. He considered that a strong young footman should be dedicated to Mr. Petty to balk his tendency to disrobe in public. Ma-

loney had three times that afternoon caught Mr. Petty without a coat, and three times he had, greatly to that gentleman's disgust, insisted upon helping him into it.

Dinner on that first evening might almost have been in America. Neither John nor Jarvis Burke appeared. Dorothy was with the others through three or four courses, and Mr. Petty, who had never seen a woman in evening dress, was so amazed by her appearance that he hardly noticed that Thomas, deputed to that duty by Maloney, put him into his coat for the sixth time. Mr. Petty was not given to reflections, especially of a self-critical kind, but that vision of Dorothy, so friendly, so gracious, so beautiful and so marvellously dressed, made him wonder, even in the adored presence of her who had once been Rose Matilda Perkins, whether he had been quite wise in his long-ago rejection of Dot Forbes's love. He brought himself back to self-esteem and to loyalty by reflecting that Dot would never do in Edgecombe; clothes like hers, he thought, as she trailed up-stairs again, rings and necklaces and "jewellery" in her hair, were all right in a play-acting house like this, but Rose Matilda, plain unvarnished Rose Matilda, went better with the hardware business.

CHAPTER XLVIII

SIX days had passed since what every one called, but nobody considered, the accident. McBirney had promised to test the earl's sight in a day or two. The inflammation had been subdued, the bandaging was less severe and the room was darkened through the day. Only at night were the curtains thrown wide. The nurse no longer served on night duty, and the door between Pat's room and Dot's stood ajar now so that she could watch him and wait upon him. It was a still night, and Pat awoke without cause and without motion. Far away in the silent house the clock struck three: there were hours yet to pass before morning and it was unlikely that he would sleep again. Lack of exercise and of air, confinement, pain and fears of blindness had made his nights wakeful and hard to bear.

Blindness! These last few days had taught him what that meant. The helplessness of it, the blank, queer loneliness, worst when he was not alone. The fear of being loved by Dot only through pity and a sense of duty. The useless

years of empty days. Never to see his wife again. Never to see all the gradual changes which would make a man of Pitty Pat. Never to hunt or ride or drive or shoot. To live like an old woman in a bath-chair. To know only what he was told, to have only what he was given, to be useless, a burden and—he always came back to it—an object of pity. And they would tell him to-morrow. McBirney would come with his damned professional soothing purr to tell him that his life was over, his eyes were closed. Pat could imagine it all, and the touch of Dot's steady little hand on his. She had been with him at every dressing and examination; she would surely not leave him to face the last alone. And the nurse cooing in sincere reassurance. Perhaps Mrs. O'Leary would be there; she had been much in the sick-room, a welcome and valued comforter and entertainer. Well! he would disappoint them all of their scene; he would know now.

He slipped the bandage from his head and lay a little while with his eyes closed but uncovered. He knew that he must be cautious. Also he was afraid. Then slowly, very slowly, he opened his eyes. Straight in front of him there was a pale oblong cut into smaller oblongs by black intersecting lines. Everything else was black. He

stared at it stupidly for a moment and then recognised it as the open window. At least, he told himself, he could distinguish light from darkness. He closed his eyes again to ponder on this mercy. He who had always had the eyes of a hawk almost wept for joy to think that he could distinguish a window against a moonlit sky. Presently he looked again. High up in one corner of the oblong a great star burned. Again he thanked high heaven and then noticed with consternation that the star was fading. "I'll shut my eyes for three minutes," said he, "then I'll look at it again. If it's gone, I'm a goner too." He counted sixty three fevered times and then looked for his star. It was fainter than before but, with a gasp of relief, he saw the reason. The edge of the moon showed in the other corner of the window.

His exclamation, soft as it had been, reached Dorothy. She had spent the night lying wide-eyed on her golden bed in her golden room. She no longer thought. She had lost the power. Her mind was now a desert place across which horrible images and imaginations passed or stopped or came again without order, without reason, without control. At first she had tried to comfort herself with the thought that the woman of her husband's first love had lived and loved and suffered

and died while she was a child at Edgecombe. But gradually this idea lost its power to console. To understand all might be to forgive all, but she knew so little, nothing but what old Mrs. Moran had told her, what John had hinted at, what Pat had tacitly admitted. "A small dark little girl," Mrs. Moran had said, "with little hands and little feet." Then quick upon this thought came another—the saying of another old woman: "The Greshams are a bad lot, my dear. Go to the picture gallery; look at the women who loved and trusted." Then, "You know this address if you ever want me," and John's "Better go home to America and arrange matters from there." How could she arrange a life with no Pat in it!

She watched the moon as it passed across her windows, and until she heard, or thought she heard, a sound in Pat's room.

When Pat had quite identified the moon he closed his eyes once more. "A blind man could see that," he told himself. "I'll try the furniture, the wall-paper."

He easily distinguished familiar chairs and then thought he detected a movement at the door which separated his room from Dot's. The moonlight struck it fairly. A tall white door showing a little slice of sweet darkness beyond it; sweet be-

cause it held his wife. The door moved yet a little more and he saw that a hand was on it; the hand was followed by a soft round arm; then came some lace, then a hanging sleeve of golden satin, and then Dot, his own incomparable Dot, slipped into the moonlight and stood there listening. No memory of her had ever been so lovely as this reality.

Yet was this Dot? He had not seen her for more than three weeks. Then she had been radiant, but this woman in the doorway, was she the same Dot? The slight straight figure was the same, the heavy hair which fell almost to her knees was the same, the fair neck which rose out of the lace held upon her breast by a long blue ribbon, the shapely arms, the little bare feet. Yes! these were all the same. But the face framed by that dusky hair was different, and it was this difference that kept him from springing up and calling to her. Her mouth and great dark eyes were full of haunting questions; she looked at once older and more childish. For an instant he marvelled and then understood. Of course she had been breaking her loving heart about him! And now it wouldn't do to tell her too suddenly that her misery had been unnecessary, that its cause was gone. She stood perfectly silent, perfectly still, and then as if dissatisfied or puzzled,

she put up her hands and lifted the heavy hair from her ears. Still Pat made no sound, but not quite reassured, she crossed the room to the dark cavern of his bed and stood close to him. She was only a silhouette now against the lighted window.

"Sweetheart," said he as steadily as he could manage it.

She stretched out her hand to arrange the covers about his shoulders. He caught the hand and kissed it. How had he known it was there, she wondered, and laid her other hand upon his head. Instead of the harsh bandage she felt his hair.

"Oh, what have you done?" she whispered.

"I've made a discovery," he answered. "I took off the bandage, and I can see. Do you understand, my sweetheart, I can see, see, see."

CHAPTER XLIX

"OH, what *do* you think?" cried the countess, coming down into the big hall where the exiles from Edgecombe were gathered together. "Pat is coming to dinner."

"Not really?" cried her mother.

"Yes, really," she made happy answer. "McBirney was here while you were out. He verified Pat's own opinion about his sight, says that with care he'll be as well as ever in a week or two. Of course, he's still in bandages, but he thinks he'd like to be with us this evening. He wants to talk to Abraham and to you, Matilda, dear."

Matilda was rather overwhelmed. The glories of Dorothy Forbes and her earl husband was the favourite myth of Edgecombe. Matilda, though she had often observed him from afar during his visit to The House, and though she had been present at the wedding, had yet never been formally presented to him, and the sudden imminence of him surrounded by romance and bandages was rather alarming. Abraham suffered no such palpitations.

"That's good," he made reply to Dot's information. "I'll be real pleased to see him again. I always told folks at home that he was a real nice feller—for an earl. I guess he was more friendly with me than with any one else in town. Sort of felt that I was wide awake and coming, don't you know."

The presence of Pat at the head of the table so upset Rose Matilda that she could eat nothing. She said less. But Pat devoted himself so gently to her reassurance that she presently felt strength of mind enough to reply to his inquiries for the health of the parrot and of Mrs. Petty, Samantha and Reuben Sands.

"Say," Mr. Petty broke out from the other end of the table, "do you know that that automatic piano-player you sent mother from New York just tickled her to death. She joined a library for records and there she sits playing them for herself as happy as a bed-bug."

A slight halt in the conversation punctuated his last words. Maloney's face seemed to suggest that Mr. Petty should instantly be cast out into the night, but that complete during-dinner speaker had several other conversational bomb-shells in reserve, and the butler, receiving no further orders, withdrew, disgruntled, to the sideboard.

"Say!" said Mr. Petty, when the silence which he had himself created had lasted long enough. "Say! Did any one ever tell ye that you two look alike?"

"It has been noticed once or twice," John Gresham answered.

"Well, it's so," said Petty. "You certainly do look alike. Twins, be ye?"

"Twins," answered John.

"Well, say," said Abraham Petty, "do tell! You know I'd hate to be a twin," he went on, "must of sort of make ye feel funny, 'you don't know who ye are' kind of feeling."

"And yet," said John Gresham very quietly, "that is a selfish view to take of it. Think what the world would gain, Mr. Petty, if there had been another of you!"

"That's all right, of course," Petty agreed. "But, say, there's another thing I noticed—about this likeness, I mean." But John would have none of him, and it was Pat who courteously came to the rescue.

"And what's that?" he asked.

"It's about them kids of yours," answered Abraham. This time he was flattered by the complete attention of every one in the room. He had gaily and instinctively opened the most im-

possible of all topics. No one had the courage or the resource to take it away from him, and so he pranced triumphantly on. "I saw them kids in the garden this morning, and they looked so much alike that I had to ask the nurse girl which was Dot's baby. And I says to Matilda, 'They might be twins, they look so much alike.' "

It was well for Mr. Petty that he required very little encouragement from his auditors. He certainly received none. If he had looked at John he might have been surprised into stopping, for John's expression was one not often worn at dinner tables. But he did not look. "Of course," he went on, "Dot's boy is a little shorter than the other, but he's just as stocky as the other one. Is there much difference between them? How old is your boy, anyway?" he questioned, looking at last toward John.

The silence produced by Mr. Petty's earlier remark was as nothing compared with that which followed this. Every face in the room turned toward John, who, ashen-gray, looked only at Dorothy. And every face held varying shades of the same enlightenment. Petty, the incorrigible, grotesque, almost idiotic Petty, had stumbled upon the truth which had eluded their more complex and over-anxious searching. For it was the truth,

the simple patent truth; no one looking at John and at Pat could doubt it; and Pat, concerned only for his brother's embarrassment, was the first to speak.

"About four years old," said he, thinking that the simple truth might satisfy and silence Mr. Petty.

It was as well that he could not see his audience. Dorothy was lying back in her chair, radiant with relief.

Mrs. Forbes was beaming though puzzled. But Mr. Forbes was in a black towering rage, and his anger was aroused almost as much by his own stupidity as by the treachery of John Gresham. Matilda Petty felt that she was in the presence of a psychic thunder-storm and cowered in her place. Mr. Petty felt nothing at all, except that he had attracted the attention of his host, and so having acted the part of Nemesis in John's behalf, he was quite ready to turn his attention to Pat's leading question:

"And what do you think of Ireland, Mr. Petty?"

"I can't say I think much of it," said Mr. Petty sadly as one knowing and regretting that his opinion must sadden and humiliate his host. "We have rode around considerable in your automobile and it certainly seems to me that Ireland is a hundred years back of the world in hardware."

For the succeeding five minutes the conversation bristled with mowing-machines, harvesters and other agricultural hardware.

Then the other members of the party were able to gather their scattered wits and vocabularies and Mr. Petty got another chance. The empty place upon Dot's right puzzled him. This was the first evening upon which he had seen the whole household gathered about the table. And still there was an empty place. Throughout the dinner he had momentarily expected some still unintroduced member of the household to come and claim it. Carefully reviewing the facts as he saw them, he arrived at the identity of the absentee, and forged another conversational bomb-shell. Nodding at the empty place, he remarked pleasantly to John:

"I guess your wife ain't coming to supper; don't she feel well?"

Without answering, without looking at any one, John stood up, went into the oak room and shut the door behind him.

"Mr. Petty," said the earl, "you are most unfortunate in your topics of conversation. Mrs. John Gresham died two months after the birth of her boy. It is a subject which is never mentioned and I must ask you to follow this rule."

"Sure," said Petty pleasantly. "I don't want to be digging up no one's feelings and then hurting them. Maybe I'd better go and tell him so."

"You had better not, Abraham," said Mr. Forbes. "I'm going to have a little talk with him and I'll tell him for you."

CHAPTER L

JOHN GRESHAM was brooding gloomily over the fire in the oak room when Forbes entered noiselessly and locked the door behind him.

"Get out of this," John growled, without turning. "I sha'n't want you to-night. Go and grovel before "The Vulgarians."

"It's not Burke," said Forbes. "I've been talking with my daughter and I've come to let you know what we've decided."

"As to my punishment?" sneered John. "Who made you my judges, and how are you going to enforce your penalty?"

He had left the fire as he spoke and crossed to the table. Forbes drew a short-barrelled, stumpy revolver from his hip pocket and laid it on the table between them.

"Ah!" snarled Gresham, "so you do condescend to firearms. I understood that you killed with your bare hands."

"Not vermin," said Forbes quietly. "And of all the vermin that God allows to crawl between heaven and hell you are the dirtiest."

John's face grew livid and he sprang at his adversary, but returned to his place and dropped into his chair when he met the muzzle of the stumpy revolver.

"Stay there," said Forbes. "There's no good in hopping around. This little daisy has got one of those noiseless, smokeless Maxim attachments. I'm trying it out. It seems to work all right. Well, now get to business. Of course you get off this place by sunup. That's number one. And you don't say one identical word to Pat."

"How much does Pat know?" John questioned.

"Nothing except that Dorothy and you made friends while he was in London, that you told her about your son and that she stands willing to adopt him if Pat agrees. Of course he does. He's a fool. Nothing of your breed could be good for anything but drowning."

John stirred uneasily in his place but Forbes went on:

"That's what he thinks. And that's what he's going to think, according to Dorothy's wish. He's never going to know. But I know, and I'm going to revive your memory. You've stolen——"

John sprang to his feet.

"Ah! set *down*. I'm telling you nothing you

don't know — stolen estate money. Thousands of it."

"How do you know?" snarled John.

"Banks," answered Forbes. "I went to Scotland Yard and they agreed with me that you'd bear looking into, all most confidential, of course."

"Scotland Yard!" repeated John. "You dared to discuss me in Scotland Yard?"

"I don't know why not. I may have to be sending for some of them to come down and call. Well, after that it was easy enough. I told you I had letters of introduction to bankers in London and Dublin. That's what I was doing when I went to London. When you go around to those banks maybe you won't find yourself just as popular as pay-day. I had nothing to do with that. They were grouchy right from the start. Said you gave them more book-keeping to do than ten other clients called for. Then," he went on, "stealing not being enough, you go and undertake to kill Dorothy on that buck-jumper of yours —oh! you needn't bother to look indignant—I had a talk with the men afterward. This is the one thing on the list that Dorothy don't know about. Then comes that dastardly trick about Michael. I don't know as I ever before met up with a man who would use his dead wife's child to ruin his

brother's home, and I was sheriff in my home county for ten years, and I saw quite some of the wrong side of human nature. Then when you know the fix-up you get ready for your brother and know that he is coming home to it, that you can't stop him——"

"How could I know?" sneered John.

"By the telegram you suppressed. I got it out of that creature of yours down to the telegraph office.

"You lie," said John. "There was no telegram."

"You're mistaken," said Forbes. "Here's the carbon copy. I got it out of him easy enough. I just twisted the top of him toward the east and the rest of him toward the west until I restored his memory. So then you knew the earl was coming home, a man that almost makes a woman of himself about you and your darned feelings—the only living creature in the world that doesn't wish you were dead. And you're afraid of him, and you take a gun and go out to shoot him in the dark."

"Never," shrieked John, springing up again. "You can't prove it."

"We don't have to. We know it."

"Who knows it? Who dares to say it?"

"Mother," answered Forbes quietly. "She's the first."

"*Mrs.* Forbes," repeated Gresham in blankest amazement. "Mrs. Forbes!"

"Yes, mother. That time I was sheriff she used to be down to the gaol a lot talking to the boys, and she got so she could pick out what they were in trouble for before I had a chance to tell her. And that night when you came out of this room so calm and smiling in your dancing shoes, mother touches my arm and says, 'That's the man. Don't you see the old murder look?' Then she talked with young Burke—fooled him into thinking that we all knew—and he gave up his part of the story. That's a nice list of activities Mr. The *Honourable* John Gresham. Now get active just once more and hustle off this place. You needn't bother about the money you stole. I've fixed that with the bankers. All you've got to do it to g-i-t git—and stay."

"And leave you all here to enjoy the work of my hands, the gardens I designed, the house I restored and made habitable; to rest under the trees I planted; to drive about the roads and avenues I laid out. Even the horses and the cattle on the hills are of my choosing; the pheasants of my raising. The plantations of my design.

This was my life and work when you and your daughter had never heard of such a place, and when Pat cared so little about it that years went by without his ever coming here. And then because it suits his damned convenience Pat comes back and gathers all of you around him and treats *me*—oh! that cursed five minutes—like a bailiff. Oh, it's a sweet life and yet, Mr. Forbes, I'm not going. You can tell your daughter what you please. Tell the earl what you please. In fact, you can do anything you please. This is my house, my place. I made them."

"They would be in America," answered Forbes; "at least a fair share of them would; but your British law is different, and you're only talking wild. Pat could have you chucked out through the big gate like you was a stray pig. You can't put up no fight; and the reason that my daughter and I are giving you a chance to get away is that we realise just how you feel. Pat might have married anybody, but he did marry my daughter and she and her boy did break into your chances. There's nothing to do about it. The laws of nature and the laws of the land work on and you get shoved out. As I say, we understand your feelings and we're sorry—good and sorry—that it happened to be us that broke your life. But what we don't

understand is the way those feelings led you to act. Embezzlement, gross deception, bad faith, murder and general all-round meanness don't seem natural symptoms to us. And that's the reason I'm telling you—for I've got the safety of this household on my hands until Pat is well—that's the reason I'm telling you you've got to be off this place by sunup. If I find you here afterward there may be an accident."

"Good night," said Gresham. "I shall see you at breakfast."

"I'm afraid not," said Forbes. "I guess you'll be starting out one way or another quite a while before that. I'll see you later. I'll sit outside by the fire in the hall until you're ready to start and I'll see that you get off all right."

CHAPTER LI

NEVER was a relief expedition treated with less gratitude than the garrison at Glendaire showed to their young David from over-seas. They had been besieged by doubt and despair while disgrace threatened them from the horizon. And behold Abraham Petty—armed metaphorically with his sling and his stone—had overcome their Goliath and had set them free.

"Stupid ass," was Pat's verdict—Pat whom he had most of all served.

"But he doesn't mean any harm," Dot remonstrated. Dot knew the fear from which she had been rescued, though Pat did not.

"I only wish he did," her husband answered. "If he had done it deliberately, one could break his back, you know. Think of a snipe like that badgering a man like John; it's preposterous! It's bad enough to have suffered as John has without being talked to about it. Wasn't it awful, Dot? How did the poor chap look?"

"He looked," she answered, "very much disturbed, as, of course, he would."

"What a life he has had!" cried Pat. "I was away, you know, when the thing happened. I never even saw the poor girl he married. It was an awful mistake from beginning to end. I think he always felt it to be so; and now, just when you've taken the child and he might be a little happy about it, along comes this idiot!"

They were out upon the terrace. Dorothy had led Pat to the marble bench upon which she and Mrs. Moran had held their interview. She sat silently beside him for a few minutes. There are some emotions which escape all words.

"How does it all look?" he asked. "Is there a sunset? I shall see it for myself in a day or two; but oh, Dorothy, think of what I have escaped!"

So she told him all the beauty of the place. It had grown even dearer to him since it had become her home. She told him of the long shadows on the grass, the pink clouds reflected in the gray-green lake, the soft, purple haze upon the mountain. Then she came back to John again.

"Does Renira Banbridge know?" she asked.

"I think not. I cannot be sure, but I think not."

"He should have told her. She will have to know it now. I fear it will be an awful shock to her unless she has suspected."

"I'm afraid," said Pat, "that she hasn't. Women don't easily suspect the men they love. There is no love, you know, without perfect faith."

"Ah! but there is. The greatest love. To honour what every one honours, to admire what every one admires, to cherish what every one desires, all these one can do without love. But to honour through shame, to admire through doubt, to cherish through disgrace, those are the tests of love."

"And do you think?" he asked, "that if I had kept some secret like this from you that you could have gone on loving me after you had discovered it?"

"I could," she answered, with full conviction. "Indeed and indeed I could!"

"Indeed and indeed I believe it," he answered. "It's a pity I haven't some horrible past for you to practise on! But I'm afraid, darling, that you'll have to go on loving me for no better reason than that I adore you. Now, we won't be tragic any more. Tell me again how the mountain looks. Is it getting much darker yet? What a wonderful thing life is, my dear! And how good it was of Providence—or evolution—to give us eyes! I grudge the loss of mine even for these few days. You're a wonderful interpreter, but I

can't help feeling sometimes that I'm missing things a bit—getting out of step, as it were, with the march of events."

Dorothy, as she made some laughing reply, was very conscious of her forced disloyalty; yet how could she tell him anything without telling him of everything, and that was, of course, impossible. One of Pat's securest anchors was his love for John. It would be impossible to touch that without uprooting it utterly, and what had she to offer in exchange? Nothing! Once or twice she had seen Pat's anger. To bring that overwhelming, unreasoning and irresponsible force to bear upon an irresponsible madman would be almost premeditated murder.

It was partly to prevent this that she and her father had agreed upon the immediate banishment of John Gresham.

CHAPTER LII

FORBES'S vigil began quietly enough. He explained to Mrs. Forbes that John was ill and that he was going to take care of him. Dorothy required no explanation, and as soon as Pat was securely asleep she crept down to the big hall.

"Well, I swan!" explained Mr. Forbes, as he drew a chair for her close to his own before the roaring fire, "if it ain't the 'Queen of Sheba' in all her glory."

"Nonsense, Dad," laughed Dorothy. "You mustn't talk like that to an old married woman."

"Stand off there a bit," he commanded. "I want to look at you. Pat hasn't had the use of his eyes recently, so perhaps nobody has told you that you're a remarkable handsome woman, my dear. Did mother ever see you in those gold clothes?"

"A hundred times, of course," said Dot.

"And with your hair in braids like it used to be when you were dad's sure enough little girl?"

"Of course, dear."

"And never said one word to me about it. Things do seem to get by a fellow."

"Come and sit down," said Dot. "I want to talk to you. What have you done about John?"

"I've given him till sunup to get off the place," said he.

"What did he say?" she questioned.

"That he's not going. That he'll meet us all at breakfast."

"Oh, Dad!" cried Dorothy miserably. "What are we going to do?"

"Well, daughter, I might as well admit that I don't know. But I hope he won't put it up to me. He's sick and he's crazy and I ain't accustomed to handling that kind. I'm counting on his nerve breaking down. This storm that's blowing up ought to help some. I was out looking at the sky a while back and if I don't miss my guess it's going to be a rouser."

"It's a rouser now," said Dorothy crouching closer to him. "These storms make me perfectly miserable."

"About your Christmas tree?" asked her father, and Dot admitted ruefully that it was the prophetic yew which troubled her.

"It is tearing and throwing itself about as if it

was in agony," she said. "I've been looking out at it from my window."

"Well, I wouldn't worry, honeybunch. I guess this ain't the first storm nor the worst storm that the old chap has come through."

There was silence for some space, and then she spoke again.

"Daddy, dear, can we drive John—a sick man, dear—out into such a night?"

"Just the kind of night to match his conscience."

"And then if he sticks to his word and doesn't go before sunup, what are you going to do to him? You haven't told me that yet."

Her father put his hand in his pocket and produced a pair of smooth steel handcuffs.

"These and the police. We're out of it then. We gave him his chance, and Pat will have to stand what he gets. It ain't going to kill Pat—we all baby him too much. He wouldn't stand for it if he knew it. Why, I know men that had things just as bad—yes, an' worse—proved against their wives and they got over it. So will Pat with you to help him. And anyway this house has been on the crazy list long enough. Something has *got* to be done and I propose to do it. I'll sit here till he comes out and then I'll help him all I can to get started off. He'll get a good start, for

they won't really begin to fuss about him until dinner to-morrow night. And even then nobody is going to chase after him. They ain't going to know they ought to. I guess he'll go all right."

"Well," said Dorothy, with troubled eyes fixed on the door of the oak room, "I wish it was all over. Do you know that he has two bottles of whiskey and ever so much morphine and a syringe in there with him? Pierre told me."

"Looks bad," said Forbes. "Guess he knows one of them fits isn't far off. Now, daughter, you go back to Pat. I'll run things down here, and if you're awake come sunup, you can slide down and hear what's doing."

It was barely peep of day when Dorothy came back. Forbes was ready for her and together they crossed to the door of the oak room.

"Let me speak to him for a moment before you put those things on," pleaded Dorothy. "Perhaps I can find some word to make him go."

The handle yielded easily, and the door opened upon an absolutely empty room.

CHAPTER LIII

WHEN Dorothy went back to her room, she did at last fall asleep. John was gone. The relief of it was overpowering. She was too tired to think of the strangeness of his going. Pat gave orders that she was not to be disturbed, and so she slept on and did not appear at breakfast.

That meal would have been a doleful affair save for the jocund presence of Mr. Petty. No storm, he boasted could disturb him, and then wrung blushing corroboration from Rose Matilda.

"Where is Dot?" he asked pleasantly.

"Asleep," said the earl. "She was very restless all night."

"And where's Mr. John?"

"Probably out about the place seeing what the storm did to us. If it weren't for these bally bandages I'd be with him. He'll be in soon, and then we'll know all about it. I'm afraid it hit the young plantations rather hard."

But they had not to wait for John's return to hear of one calamity. Dorothy, still in her golden

draperies, flashed down the stairs and to Pat's side.

"Oh, my dear," she wailed, "the yew! the poor old yew! I looked out as soon as I woke and——"

"It's not down?" demanded Pat.

"Not altogether, but a great branch is torn off. And oh, Pat! It means something. It must mean something."

"Well, it can't mean anything very bad," Pat reassured her. "I'm as fit as a fiddle, and I heard the two boys roaring in the garden most reassuringly. And as for John, of course *he's* all right."

But as the morning progressed, Pat became a little less sure. Dr. McBirney came down from Dublin, removed the bandages and pronounced the recovery to be complete.

"And not a minute too soon," said Pat. "If ever a man wanted his eyes I'm the chap this day."

There were mutual congratulations and felicitations, and then Pat ordered a horse to be brought round.

"This is a queer thing about John," he said to Dorothy. "Somehow I don't like it, but before we stir up the servants, I'll ride over to the Monastery and see if he is with Renira. By the way, dear, they tell me that the branch that was knocked off the yew was all rotten and hollow and that

the tree will be much better without it. So that's one worry off your dear old mind. Now I'm off. Oh, but it's ripping to be alive again."

He found Sir Richard in his study in a most irascible temper.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he said peering through the dusk. "Well, and how are things going? Papa-in-law killed anything yet? Dear brother going on well? By the way, why don't you go in for poison? Shooting is so messy."

"I'm Pat," said the tall figure quietly, "and I don't think I understand you."

"Then what the devil," cried Banbridge, furiously angry, "do you mean by slinking in here and pretending to be your brother?"

"I came over," Pat answered, putting a fierce control over himself, "to see if John was here."

"Well, he isn't and he hasn't been here to-day."

"Were your opening remarks," said Pat slowly, "meant for John?"

"They weren't meant at all," said Banbridge. "Sit down and have a drink and then you can amble off up the glen to look for your precious brother. I doubt if you'll find him short of the constabulary barracks."

"The constabulary barracks?" Pat repeated.

"Yes. The people were slow enough about

evidence when their own fellows were suspected and accused, but now that they've sent a chap from Dublin and he begins to suspect John then the amount of evidence is overwhelming. I had an hour of it this morning."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Pat. "What is John suspected of?"

"It's beyond suspicion," said Banbridge. "I knew it at the time from his manner. It was he who shot you."

"You lie," roared Pat and struck him in the mouth.

"You fool," said Banbridge, "you shall account for that blow presently, but now you'll hear about John. I don't know the full list of his trickery, but what I do know I'll tell you. He shot you. Ever since your marriage he has systematically cheated the estate. He's raised the rents to impossible heights and has made no difference in the books. But it was when you were in London that he really enjoyed himself. His idea was to get rid of the countess, the young viscount and all the rest—to drive them back to America before your return. So he got that child of his from over the mountain and introduced him to your wife as *yours*. He thought that would surely start them. But the countess

closed on the kid and he was dished. That's the reason he tried to kill you."

Pat was striding up and down the room. "Remember," he thundered, "I don't believe a word of your foul story. But if it should be true—I'm going home to investigate—then you'll not see your friend John Gresham very often after this. Will you ring for my horse."

"There is one more thing," said Banbridge. "Again, while you were in London he let the countess mount that horse Thunderbolt. She would have been dashed to pieces in the stable yard if it had not been for her father, that wild man; he saved her life."

"My horse?" demanded Pat. "My horse?"

CHAPTER LIV

THE early twilight was closing in as the Earl of Glamoran rode home to his castle, and as he went all that was boy in him died out, for he knew, despite all his efforts at self-deception, that some, at least, of what Banbridge had said was true.

A dull rage burned in him and at times flashed up into a curse. Cheated, on every hand, by every one. Dorothy, his wife, was the worst offender. And then justice awoke in him. He remembered that he himself had forbidden all mention of his brother's shortcomings, had shown her that in some regards John was more to him than she could ever be.

And Forbes? Forbes had warned him too. And he had seen and disregarded a thousand incidents of mismanagement and cruelty among the tenants. Clearly now he recalled that old, old incident of Mrs. Mulready. There was his enlightenment. Dot held it up to him, and he refused to see.

And his mother: in season and out of season she had warned him.

And he, a bally fool, played tennis, while the sun shone, and let the wrongs go on.

At last he came in sight of his home. The southern wing was all lit up. There were the nurseries and Dot's rooms. He quivered when he thought of the dearness of what they held, and his face hardened when he thought of Thunderbolt.

A groom came running up, saw the altered face above him and touched his hat.

"Good evening, Mr. Gresham," he ventured.

Pat looked at him stolidly, then turned and mounted the steps.

"The master's worse than ever," the groom reported at the stables.

The great hall was empty. So were the billiard-room and the drawing-room. But, in the library, Dorothy was standing before the big fire with her hands on the mantel-piece and one small shoe toasting on the fender. She turned at Pat's entrance, looked at his wild and ravaged face and with a cry of "John! go! too late!" she fell flat upon the hearth-rug in the first and only faint of her career.

Pat sprang to her and as he did so he saw his haggard face in the mirror, and thought that John was behind him. He wheeled about. The

room was empty. He turned back to the mirror and realised that the face was his. And as he gathered his wife into his arms prepared to carry her up-stairs, he muttered:

"No necessity for asking her anything. Poor little girl, she's given her evidence in full. Fainted dead away when she thought she saw him. Dot! my plucky, fearless Dot."

He carried her to her mother, and they soon restored her, and then Pat went in search of Forbes.

He found him knocking the balls about the billiard table. Forbes glanced up as Pat came in.

"Well, son," said he, "who told you?"

"Banbridge."

Forbes nodded. "Just like the dirty skunk."

"Was he right?"

"I guess so, as far as he got. Of course he don't know it all. I doubt if anybody ever will."

"Where is he," demanded Pat savagely. "Oh, where is he?"

"That's more than I can say," Forbes answered. "I gave him until sunup this morning to get away from here. He seems to be gone. I'm darned if I know how he went. I left him in his room and sat outside all night. He never came out, and when I went into the room at sun-

up he was gone. And a good thing, too," he added, as he looked at Pat's altered face. "If you could get at him now you'd do something you'd be sorry for later on."

Pat dashed off at a tangent. "And you've all been deceiving me, treating me like a boy, a child."

"Well," said Forbes, "you've been behaving like a boy. Fooling around with your tennis, your four-in-hand and one thing and another. Leaving your work in life to another man and never seeing how he did it. And, besides, it was Dorothy's wish that her coming shouldn't separate you two brothers."

"Oh, where is he? Where is he! If I could only find the beast. I'll go out again. I'll go to some of the other neighbours and see if they have news of him."

As he opened the door, the long, wailing note of a blood-hound caught his attention and he realised that he had been hearing it ever since he entered the house.

"What the devil is that?" he demanded of Forbes.

"That's Pluto. He's been carrying on like that for hours. Cheerful ain't it? Nothing can budge him and nothing can make him stop."

Pat went to the oak room and found the disconsolate Pluto howling and whining with his nose to one spot in the wainscotting. At sight of the earl his whines changed to yelps of entreaty. Forbes had followed Pat and now he spoke.

"That's the way he carries on every time anybody comes into the room. What do you suppose is the matter with him?"

"We'll soon see," said Pat. "There's an old secret passage here and Pluto is evidently suspicious of it. Stand back a bit till I see if I remember the combinations. John and I used it often and often when we were youngsters."

At this reminiscence the realisation of his wrongs struck him freshly. "I oughtn't to be here," said he. "I ought to be out looking for him. And when I find him—oh, well, threats are nothing."

He made one or two false attempts at finding the secret combination. Pluto meanwhile was sniffing and whining more busily than ever, and when at last Pat mastered the problem and the door slid back, then Pluto sprang into the darkness. An instant later he gave a long and terrible wail. The two men looked at one another. Pat lighted one of the candles on the mantel-piece and holding it high in the dark, twisting passage they followed the dog.

And half-way along the passage, half-way to freedom and such a life as remained to him, they came upon the body of John Gresham, hideously huddled together and lying on the stone floor. His most relentless enemy had caught him there, and in the dark he had struggled against and been conquered by the fit which had been sure to follow upon his late intemperance and excitement.

Pat held the candle close to the ghastly, distorted face, then turned to Forbes.

"Dead," said he; "cheated me even of revenge."

"You will live," said Forbes, "to thank God for that."

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